DICK MERRIWELL'S TRAP

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DICK MERRIWELL'S TRAP

OR,

THE CHAP WHO BUNGLED

BY

BURT L. STANDISH

Author of the famous Merriwell Stories.

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CHAPTER I—A FARDALE VICTORY

For a moment as he lay on the ground holding the ball for Dick Merriwell to kick the goal that must win the game with Hudsonville for Fardale Military Academy, Hal Darrell, the left half-back, was seized by a strong temptation to do wrong. How easy it would be to spoil that kick! A slight shifting of the ball just as the captain of the Fardale eleven kicked, and the attempt for a goal would be ruined.

There was bitterness in Hal's heart, for he realized that Dick was covering himself with glory, while up in the grand stand sat June Arlington, a thrilled witness to everything that had occurred during that most thrilling game.

At first Hal Darrell had refused to play on the team during this game, but because June had urged him to reconsider his determination not to play, Hal had humbled his proud spirit and offered to take part in it. But even then, to his chagrin, he was left among the substitutes until Earl Gardner, who had been given his position when he withdrew from the team, was injured so badly that he could not continue in the game. Then Dick Merriwell thought of Hal Darrell's desertion of the team and at first wanted to punish him for it by leaving him on the substitutes' bench, but his better nature conquered and the spirit of forgiveness reigned triumphant.

Hal knew nothing of Dick's temptation to call out another player to take Gardner's place, which would have humiliated and infuriated Darrell to an unspeakable degree. Hal was not aware that Dick fought the temptation down, crushed it, conquered it, and did what he believed was best for Fardale, regardless of his own inclination and feelings.

So Hal had been given his old position as half-back and had played a steady game, contributing greatly to Fardale's success, although he made no individual play of brilliancy that distinguished him above the others.

At the same time he had seen Dick make a great run down the field, had seen him leap clean over one tackler, and had witnessed a touch-down that tied the score between Hudsonville and Fardale. If Dick kicked the goal the game

would be won.

If he failed it would most certainly remain a tie, as there was not enough more playing time to enable either side to score again, unless some amazing fluke should take place.

So as Hal lay on the ground, holding the ball, he was tempted. Under any circumstances Fardale would come out of the game with flying colors. During the first half she had been outplayed by the big Hudsonville chaps, who had secured two touch-downs and a goal. Her line had been weak, and she had seemed to have very little chance of making a point. It looked like a hopeless battle against overpowering odds.

But Dick had never given up for a moment. He had kept up the courage of his men. And all through the first half Obediah Tubbs, the fat boy who played center on Fardale, had continued to hammer at Glennon, the big center of the opposing team, until finally all the fight and sand had been taken out of the fellow, and the strongest point in Hudsonville's line became the weakest.

The cadets took advantage of that weakness in the second half. The most of their gains were made through center. Glennon, limp as a rag, asked to go out of the game; but King, the captain, angrily told him to stand up to his work, knowing it would discourage the others to lose the big fellow, who had never yet failed to play through any game he had entered.

And when Dick Merriwell had been hurt and it seemed he must leave the field, Hal had seen June Arlington—forgetting appearances, remembering only that Dick was stretched on the ground and might not rise again—run out from the grand stand and kneel to lift his head.

Standing apart, his heart beating hotly, Darrell saw her give back to Dick a locket containing her picture—a locket she had given to him once before when he had risked his life to save her from some savage dogs which attacked her on a lonely road on the outskirts of Fardale, and then demanded again after her brother had told her some untrue tales about Dick.

"She would not let me have it when I asked her for it after she got it back," thought Hal. "But now she gives it to him again! And she does not mind who sees her!"

It seemed very strange for a proud, high-bred girl like June Arlington to do such a thing before the assembled spectators. She had been governed by her heart, not her head. Had she paused to consider, she would have been dismayed; but she scarcely knew how she reached Dick, and she seemed to come to a realization of her position first as she knelt and held his head. Then she had courage not to lose her nerve, and she gave him the locket as a "charm" to restore his good luck.

It was after this that Dick made the run that set thirty "faithful" Fardale rooters howling mad with joy. He did it even though he reeled and could scarcely

stand when he rose to his feet. He did it by casting off his physical weakness and calling to his command all the astonishing reserve force of a perfectly trained young athlete. But for his training and his splendid physical condition, he would have been carried from the field, done up.

In the moment of his temptation Hal realized that Dick had trusted him perfectly in calling him to hold the ball.

"But he's made me help him win glory in her eyes!" was the stinging thought that followed.

However, he conquered the temptation. As Dick balanced himself, Darrell carefully lowered the ball toward the ground. The seam was uppermost and everything was ready for the kick that would decide whether the game should end a tie or Fardale should leave the field victorious.

Darrell's hand was perfectly steady as Dick advanced quickly and kicked. Fairly over the middle of the bar sailed the ball, and the "faithful" shrieked and howled and thumped one another on the back and had fits.

But they were not the only ones who had fits. Apart at one side of the field Chester Arlington, June's brother, and a student at Fardale, walked round and round in a circle, muttering and almost frothing at the mouth. Then he started for the grand stand.

"I'll tell her what I think!" he grated.

But he stopped and stared at the field, where Hudsonville was making a listless pretense of playing during the few moments that remained. He seemed to go into a trance and stand there until the whistle blew and the game was over. He saw the "faithful" go tearing on to the gridiron and surround Dick, and he could bear to see no more.

"I believe I'll have to kill him yet!" he snarled, as he turned away.

He walked blindly into the rail beyond which the spectators were slowly filing out from the enclosure. Some of them stared at him wonderingly, noting his wildly glaring eyes and hearing his incoherent mutterings.

"What ails that chap?" said a man.

"Gone bughouse," intimated another. "Who is he?"

"Don't know. Saw him with that pretty girl who ran out on the field when Merriwell was hurt."

"He's a Fardale boy?"

"Yes."

"Must be crazy with joy. Can't blame him after seeing his team win in that way."

Chester crawled under the rail and bumped against a man.

"Get out of the way, you old fool!" he snarled.

"Who are you talking to?" demanded the man, in astonishment and anger.

"Who are you calling an old fool?"

"You! you! you! You ran into me—me, son of D. Roscoe Arlington! Do you hear?"

"You're a crazy ass!" said the man, and walked on.

Somehow those words seemed to bring Chester to his senses in a measure.

"Brace up, old man!" he muttered huskily. "Why, I wouldn't have Merriwell see you like this for a fortune!"

He passed out through the gate with others and started away. Then he bethought himself and turned back to where a carriage, containing a driver, waited. He got into the carriage.

"Go on," he growled.

"But the young lady, sir," said the driver; "your sister."

"Oh, yes!" mumbled Chester. "I had forgotten her. We'll wait for her. Darrell is a thundering fool!"

"I beg your pardon, sir?" said the driver.

"Nothing that concerns you," growled Arlington, and he sat like a graven image, waiting for June.

CHAPTER II—DICK STOPS A RUNAWAY

The sweat-stained, bruised, battered, triumphant Fardale lads peeled off their football armor in the dressing-room beneath the stand. Earl Gardner was there, barely able to walk, but supremely happy. Dick was happy, too. Scudder, partly recovered from a collapse, was shaking hands with everybody.

"It was a shame!" said Ted Smart in fun. "I hated to see us do it! They were so sure of the game that it seemed like robbery to take it."

"By Jim! I'll be sore to-morrer!" piped Obediah Tubbs. "Never got no sech drubbin' before sence dad used to lay me over his knee an' swat me with the razor-strop."

"But you put Glennon on Queer Street," smiled Dick. "And that was the finest thing I ever saw happen to a bruiser like him."

"He! he! he!" came from the fat boy. "I kinder thought I might git called

down fer some of that business, but the empire didn't dast say a word."

"I should opine not," put in Brad Buckhart, the Texan. "He permitted Glennon to start the slugging-match, and he couldn't say anything when it became too hot for the big tough."

"Both umpire and referee were against us," grunted Bob Singleton.

"But we won out against all odds, fellows," said Dick cheerily. "And I am proud of you!"

"It's us that sus-sus-sus-should be pup-pup-pup-proud of you!" chattered Chip Jolliby, his protruding Adam's apple bobbing as it always did when he was excited and tried to talk fast.

"That's right! that's right!" cried the boys. "Captain Dick was the one who turned the trick and won the game!"

"No, fellows," said Dick earnestly. "I did what I could, but to no one individual belongs the glory of this game. It was a victory won by the splendid courage and staying qualities of the whole team. It was the kind of courage that wins great battles. It showed that this team is made up of the right kind of stuff. We were stronger at the finish than at the start, while they were weaker. It's staying power that counts."

Dick was right. And it is "staying power" that counts in the great game of life, just the same as in football. A fellow may have ability and be brilliant in his accomplishments, but if he has not "staying power" he will be beaten out every time by the tireless, persistent, dogged plodder.

The boys were not able to bathe and be rubbed down there, so they hustled on their clothes and prepared to make for the hotel, where they might cleanse and refresh themselves after their successful struggle.

"Thunder!" moaned Tubbs. "How hungry I be! Don't think I ever was so hungry before in all my life."

Then it was that some of the faithful appeared with pies of various sorts, procured at a bakery in town, and delivered them to the fat boy, who was so fond of pies that he ate all he could even while in training, the one who presented them making a humorous speech.

When the boys piled into the big carryall that was to take them to the hotel Obediah had his lap full of pies. Holding one in each hand, he proceeded to devour them, a supremely happy look on his full-moon face. Along the route he was observed with amusement, and he laughed and waved his pies at those who laughed at him.

It seemed that almost half a hundred small boys were waiting for the Fardale team to appear, and they ran after the carryall, cheering and calling to one another.

"Well, we seem to have won favor with the kids, anyhow," said Dick.

When the hotel was reached the boys leaped out and hurried in.

Dick was ascending the steps when a carriage bearing Chester Arlington and his sister drew up. Chester was talking to June in a manner that showed his temper. When he saw Dick, he ordered the driver to drive on, but June said:

"You will stop here. I am going to get out here."

"Not if I know it!" grated her brother, his face pale with anger. "You'll never speak to that fellow again if I can prevent it!"

"Get down, driver," said June firmly, "and assist me to alight, if my brother is not gentleman enough to do so."

The driver sprang down at once, but Arlington grasped his sister's arm to restrain her.

At this moment a big dog pounced upon another in front of the building, and the fighting, snarling animal was under the feet of the horse in a twinkling. With a snort, the animal sprang away, the reins being jerked from the hands of the driver.

Arlington had partly risen to his feet, and the sudden leap of the horse flung him backward over the seat to the ground.

June Arlington was the only occupant of the carriage as the runaway dashed wildly down the main street of the town.

Dick had witnessed this occurrence. He made a leap down the steps, but was too late to reach the horse.

Chester Arlington sat up, looking dazed and frightened.

"Stop that horse!" he cried, in genuine alarm. "A hundred dollars to the man who stops that horse!"

Even as he uttered the words, Dick Merriwell caught a bicycle from the hands of a boy who had ridden up and was standing beside his machine. On to the bicycle leaped the captain of the eleven, alighting in the saddle and catching the pedals instantly with his feet. Away he went after the runaway, somewhat slowly at first, but with swiftly increasing speed.

"Hi! hi! Runaway! Runaway!"

"Look out for that horse!"

"The girl will be hurt!"

"She may be killed!"

"Look at the fellow on the bike!"

"He can't catch the horse!"

"Couldn't stop him if he did!"

The crowd rushed away after the runaway, shouting loudly. Others ran out from offices and stores. In a twinkling the whole street was swarming with excited persons.

Dick bent over the handlebars and pedaled with all the strength and skill he could command. He felt that it was to be a race for life, and he set his teeth, his

heart filled with the win-or-die determination that had made him remarkable on the gridiron.

A farmer turning in from another street barely reined his horse aside in time to avoid a collision. He caught a glimpse of the pale face of the girl in the carriage.

A man ran out and waved his arms at the horse, but he jumped aside when the animal came straight on without swerving.

Another dog darted after the runaway, barking furiously and adding to its terror and speed.

June turned and looked back. She saw the bicyclist coming after her, and she was not so frightened that she failed to recognize Dick Merriwell.

The dog that had barked at the horse got in Dick's road and barely sprang aside in time. Had the wheel struck the animal Dick's pursuit might have ended there in a twinkling.

It was astonishing how fast young Merriwell flew over the ground. He strained every nerve. Dick soon saw he was gaining. Fortunately the street was long and straight, and the runaway kept a fairly straight course. The reins were on the ground, and it seemed that the girl could do nothing to help herself. Once she partly rose, as if to spring from the carriage.

"Don't do it!" cried Dick. "Hold on! I'll save you!"

Did she hear him? Whether she did or not, she sank back on the seat and looked round again.

The lad on the bicycle was nearer—he was gaining. It happened that Dick had seized a racing-wheel that was geared very high. Fortunately the road was level and fairly good for his purpose.

Out of Hudsonville tore the runaway, but Dick was close to the carriage when the horse reached the outskirts of the town. He was confident then that he would soon overtake the horse. But could he stop the animal then?

Watching for the opportunity, Dick pushed the wheel along by the side of the carriage. Not a word did he speak to the girl, and she made no appeal to him.

Strange as it may seem, all the fear had departed from June, and she was watching Dick's efforts with curiosity and confidence. Here was a fellow to be admired. She asked herself how he would stop the horse, but she believed that somehow he would succeed.

Past the carriage Dick forged. The wheel whirled beneath him. On the hard road the hoofs of the horse beat a tattoo. The wind was whistling in the lad's ears, but he heard it not. Cold and keen, it cut his face, but he minded it not.

Nearer, nearer, nearer. Now he was at the fore quarters of the horse, and he gathered himself for a last burst of speed, fearing the creature might see him and sheer suddenly to one side. In a sudden fine spurt he was at the head of the horse. Then his hands left the handlebars. In a twinkling he had the horse by the

bit with one hand, while the fingers of the other fastened on the animal's nostrils, closing them instantly.

The bicycle went down, and the wheels of the carriage crashed over it, but Dick had swung free, and he clung like grim death to the horse.

June Arlington watched that struggle, her heart swelling at the heroism and nerve of the boy who had ridden thus to her rescue. To her it was a grand struggle, and her faith in her savior never faltered for a second.

The horse tried to fling up his head, but the weight of the boy held it down. It seemed that his feet might strike the lad and cause him to relinquish his hold. In that case, Dick would fall beneath the iron hoofs, to be maimed or killed.

But the horse could not breathe, his nostrils being closed, and this soon caused it to show signs of weakness. Its speed decreased, and Dick, clinging there desperately, felt that the battle would be won if he could hold out a little longer.

Could he? He had made up his mind that he would—that nothing on earth should prevent it. When Dick set his mind on anything like that he always won, and this case was no exception. Little by little the horse faltered. And then, with surprising suddenness, it gave out entirely and stopped.

Dick did not relinquish his hold at once. He held on, talking to the animal and trying to allay its fears. In this he succeeded wonderfully, until he soon was confident enough to let up and permit the animal to breathe.

When the creature was fully quieted and under control, young Merriwell turned to the girl in the carriage. He was hatless, flushed, triumphant, handsome.

"You are quite safe, Miss Arlington," he said.

"Thanks to you," she answered, in a voice that did not tremble. "But I knew you would do it!"

Dick picked up the reins from the ground when he had succeeded in quieting the horse, and climbed into the carriage.

Two men driving out of town in pursuit of the runaway met Dick Merriwell, with June Arlington at his side, serenely driving back into town.

"By thunder!" said one of the men wonderingly. "This beats the world! He's stopped the horse and is driving the critter back as cool as you please."

"Who is he?" asked the other man.

"Dick Merriwell, brother of Frank Merriwell, the great Yale athlete, who used to go to school at Fardale."

"Well, he's a good one."

"A good one! He's a rip-snorter! Not many boys of his years could 'a' done that job!"

Dick spoke to them pleasantly.

"We were after the runaway," said one of the men; "but I rather think you don't need none of our help."

"Thank you, no," said Dick. "But you might drive on a short distance and pick up that bicycle. I think it is pretty badly smashed. If you'll bring it back to the hotel I'll be much obliged."

"We'll do it," said both men.

"Good boy! Well done!" was shouted at him from all sides as he drove along the main street toward the hotel.

When he reached the hotel he found a crowd gathered there. Chester Arlington, pale as a ghost and covered with dirt, was sitting on the steps.

The Fardale crowd was on hand to cheer Dick, but he called on them to be quiet.

"This horse is nervous enough now," he said. "Do you want to start him off again?"

"He'd be all right with you behind him," declared Joe Savage.

"That's Dick Merriwell!" piped a small boy, bursting with enthusiastic admiration. "Ain't he jest a peacherino!"

"Boy, it's marvelous!" declared a man. "You deserve great credit. It may be that you saved this girl's life! She shouldn't forget that."

"I won't!" murmured June, loud enough for Dick to hear.

The driver took the horse by the head.

"I'll hold him," he said, "while you get out. I don't know how I can thank you for keeping him from smashing the carriage and injuring himself."

"Where is my bicycle?" asked the boy from whose hands Dick had snatched the wheel.

"Here it comes," Dick answered, noting that the two men in the team were approaching, with the ruined bicycle held before them. "But I'm afraid you'll never ride it again."

"Well, that's pretty tough on me," said the boy, sadly, yet plainly trying to keep from showing his grief. "I won that for a prize in a race at the county fair this fall. But I ain't going to fuss over it as long as you stopped the horse and kept her from being hurt."

"Perhaps you'll get another one, all right," said Dick. "I think you will, even if I have to pay for it."

"You won't have to do that," declared the man who had been among the first to express his admiration over Dick's feat. "The girl's brother said he'd give a hundred dollars to the one who stopped the horse. That ought to buy another wheel."

"But I didn't mean that I'd give it to him!" said Chester Arlington weakly.

"What?" roared the man. "What's the difference who stopped the horse? I heard you telling since the runaway started that you are the son of D. Roscoe Arlington, the great railroad man. If that's so your father can buy a whole bicycle-

factory without going broke. You'd better keep your word."

"You mind your business!" jerked out Chester, trying to rise from the steps to meet June, who had been assisted to the ground by Dick. "It was on his account that——"

Then Chester's knees buckled beneath him, and he dropped in a limp heap at the foot of the steps. With a cry, June bent over him.

"He's hurt!" she exclaimed, in great agitation. "Chester! Chester! Speak to me, brother!"

But Chester Arlington lay white and still on the ground.

"I think he has fainted, Miss Arlington," said Dick. "Don't be alarmed. He may not be seriously hurt at all. The fright over your danger may have brought this on. Come, fellows, let's carry him into the hotel."

Brad Buckhart drew back.

"Well, I don't care about dirtying my hands on the coyote," he muttered.

There were others, however, who were ready enough to assist Dick, and Chester was borne into the hotel, where he was attended by one of the village doctors who had joined the crowd. In a few moments he recovered.

The doctor was unable to tell just how much Chester was hurt, and he was taken to a room for further examination and treatment. June kept close to him, betraying the greatest anxiety on his account.

Chester's back was injured, and he did not seem to have strength enough in his legs to walk. However, as he lay on the bed, he gave his sister a reproachful look, saying:

"See what you have brought me to, June! It was all on account of your obstinacy, and——"

"Oh, hush, Chester!" she said gently. "I am very sorry anything happened to you."

"And you came near being killed, too. If you had——"

"Don't talk that way! I am all right, thanks to Mr. Merriwell."

He started as if he had been stabbed with a keen point, his face showing pain and anger.

"That fellow! that fellow!" he panted. "That he should be the one to stop the horse! Oh, I'd given anything rather than had him save you!"

"I presume you would have preferred to see me thrown out and injured or killed!" she exclaimed.

"No," he huskily said, "no, June! Oh, you don't know how I felt when I realized what had happened and that you might be hurt! I tried to get up and run after the horse, but I didn't have the strength. June, you know I—I wouldn't have harm come to you for anything. You know it! But to have him save you!"

There was no doubting Chester Arlington's affection for his sister; but his

hatred for Dick Merriwell was equally intense.

"My dear brother!" she murmured, gently touching his hair. "Don't be silly! Don't worry any more. It's all right."

"No, no; all wrong!" he groaned.

CHAPTER III—HAPPINESS AND MISERY

Dick escaped from the crowd and from his friends and took a bath, followed by a brisk rub-down. When this was over, he donned his clothes, feeling pretty well, for all of the game he had played through, for all of his exertions in pursuing the runaway, for all of the bruises received in stopping the frightened horse.

Being in perfect physical condition, he recovered swiftly. His eyes were sparkling and there was a healthy glow in his cheeks as he hurriedly packed his stuff and prepared to take the train that was to carry the triumphant cadets back to Fardale.

He could hear the boys singing in a room across the corridor. The "faithful" were having a high old time. They were packed into that room, their arms locked about one another, howling forth the old songs of their academy, "Fair Fardale," "The Red and Black," and "Fardale's Way."

"It's no use moaning, it's no use groaning,
    It's no use feeling sore;
Keep on staying, keep on playing,
    As you've done before.
Fight, you sinner; you're a winner,
    If you stick and stay;
Never give in while you're living—
    That is Fardale's way."

Dick smiled as he heard this familiar old song roared forth by the lusty-lunged chaps who were rejoicing over the wonderful victory. It gave him a feeling of inexpressible pleasure, and it was something he would never forget as long as he

lived.

Oh, these wonderful days at Fardale! It was not likely he would forget them in after years. He had learned to love the old school as Frank Merriwell loved it before him, and he was thankful that Frank had rescued him from the lonely life in far-away Pleasant Valley beneath the shadow of the Rockies and brought him to the academy.

Not that Dick's heart had ever ceased to turn lovingly toward the hidden valley where he had lived a peaceful, happy life, with his little cousin Felicia Delores as his sole companion and playmate near his own age. True, he often thought of the days when he had wandered alone into the woods and called about him the birds and wild creatures, every one of whom seemed to know him and fear him not a bit. True it was that he realized a change had come over him so that no longer could he call the birds and the squirrels as he had done; but still he was happy and had no desire to exchange the present for the past.

"No matter where we roam in the mystic years to come,
There are days we never shall forget,
The happy days when we, in a school beside the sea,
Cast aside the past without regret;
'Twas there sweet friendship grew 'mid hearts forever true,
And our longing souls must oft turn back
With yearnings for that time in youth's fair golden clime
When we wore the royal red and black.

"Oh, the royal red and black!
We'll love it to the end.
True to it we'll stand,
And true to every friend;
So rise up, boys, and cheer
For those colors bright and clear—
For the royal red and black."

In spite of himself, Dick's eyes filled with a mist as he heard this sweet song, in which the great chorus joined in that room packed with loyal Fardale lads. His lips smiled while there was a tear in his eye, for that tear was a pearl of happiness. They were cheering! He stopped and listened. They cheered for the red and black, and then a voice cried:

"I propose the long cheer for Captain Merriwell, the royal defender of the red and black, the greatest captain Fardale ever knew, and the finest fellow who ever breathed. Let her go!"

They did let her go! It seemed that they would raise the roof. And the cheer ended with Dick's name three times shouted at the full capacity of their lusty, boyish lungs.

In his room Chester Arlington heard them, and he writhed with mental anguish that caused him to forget his bodily pain.

"Fools! fools!" he snarled. "Where is Darrell? Why doesn't he come to me? Is he ashamed because he broke his promise not to play? Well, he ought to be! He swore he wouldn't go into that game, and then he went!"

June could have told her brother that Hal offered to go into the game because she had urged him to do so, but she did not care to agitate Chester any further just then.

"You must keep still," she said. "The doctor is going to bring back another physician and make a closer examination. You may be seriously hurt."

"No!" snapped Chester. "I won't have it so!"

"But I hope it is not so."

"I won't have it so! Why should I be hurt while he—while Dick Merriwell is all right? It isn't possible!"

"I hope not! I think you will be all right, Chester."

"You're a good sister, June!" he suddenly exclaimed, looking at her. "I'm sorry you made the mistake of having anything to do with that cheap fellow Merriwell. But, June, you can never know how I felt when I saw you in that carriage and knew I could do nothing to save you. I thought I should die! But to have him save you, June—that was the bitterest pill of all!"

"Don't keep thinking about that, Chester. Just be quiet until we find out how much you are hurt. It will kill mother if you are hurt much."

For Chester Arlington's mother doted on him. He was her pride and joy, and she had implicit confidence in him. She had permitted June to come to Fardale to satisfy June that Chester was in the right in his trouble with Dick Merriwell, but she had not fancied that June did not mean to let her brother know she was in town until after she had investigated and discovered the truth.

"I won't be hurt!" exclaimed the unfortunate lad. "Why should anything like that happen to me? But it was so strange that I had no strength in my legs when I tried to stand."

"That is what worried the doctor."

"Worried him?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He was afraid your spine had been injured."

Chester turned still paler.

"My spine?" he whispered, a look of horror on his face. "Why, if that should

be, I might become a helpless cripple."

"Oh, I don't think it's anything like that!" cried the girl, regretting that she had spoken so plainly. "I am sure it isn't."

He lay still and stared up at the ceiling.

"A cripple!" came huskily from his lips. "What a terrible thing! And that fellow still strong and well! Nothing ever happens to him. Why is it? It's his luck—his luck!"

June knew he was thinking of Dick Merriwell, and she thought how nearly Dick had been knocked out of the game that day, how she had rushed to him as he lay on the field, and how she had given him the little locket as a "charm" to keep away misfortune in the future.

"What made you do it, June?" whined the lad on the bed, and she started as she realized he was thinking of the same thing. "It was a shame—a disgrace!"

"I'm sorry I disgraced you, Chester!" she said, somewhat coldly.

"I'd rather given anything than to have my sister make such a spectacle of herself. All Fardale will know of it! They will say you are smitten on him—on that fellow!"

"Chester, I know how much you dislike him; but don't you think you are somewhat in the wrong yourself?"

He started to his elbow, with a cry.

"It's hard enough to be knocked out this way without having my sister go back on me for a dog like that!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"He is no dog, Chester! Have you forgotten that he stopped the runaway and saved me?"

"No! no! Wish I could!"

"Have you forgotten that this is the second time he has saved me? Surely I owe him something! I owe him respect, at least!"

"That's all! You can keep away from him! June, you must stay in Fardale no longer. I'll write mother. That is, if you do not decide to leave at once."

"Perhaps I may not be able to leave."

"Not able?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"You may need me."

"You think I am going to be as bad as that? Then that infernal doctor must have told you something he did not say to me! But I'll fool him—I'll fool them all! I'll get up all right in a day or so! It's nothing but a sprained back! Why doesn't Darrell come to me? Has he gone back on me entirely?"

"Perhaps the doctor has told everybody to keep away."

"Confound the doctor! June, go find Hal Darrell and tell him to come here

right away. I have something to say to that fellow, and I'm going to say it while it is hot on my mind."

"Keep still while I am gone," she said. "Will you?"

He promised, and she left the room to look for Darrell.

CHAPTER IV—JUNE'S PROMISE

The hilarious fellows were repeating "The Red and Black" when Dick passed down-stairs in search of the boy whose bicycle had been smashed. Dick had been thinking of that lad. The boy had not raised a fuss over the destruction of his wheel, and Merriwell admired him for his behavior.

The boy was sitting on the hotel steps, mournfully trying to bend the twisted spokes back into shape. A number of his friends had gathered around him.

"It's tough on you, Sammy," said one of the group. "No fellow has a right to grab a chap's wheel and smash it like that."

"He didn't mean to do it," said Sammy.

"That don't make no difference! He hadn't any right to take it at all."

"He did it to chase the runaway and save the girl."

"Well, you didn't start the runaway. You wasn't to blame for it. Somebody oughter to pay you for your wheel."

"The fellow whose sister he saved said he'd give anybody a hundred dollars to stop the horse. Why didn't he keep his word? Then Dick Merriwell could pay me for my bike and have fifty dollars left."

Dick was deeply moved by this, and he came down the steps at once. The boys looked a bit startled as they saw him and realized he might have heard some of their talk.

"So you won your bicycle in a race at a fair, Sammy?" he said.

"Yes," said the boy, and there was a little choke in his throat. "It was the best wheel I ever had. Judge Merritt put it up as a prize for the best rider."

"An' he thought his son was going to git it," put in a little fellow; "but Sammy he jest beat Arthur Merritt out at the finish an' got the wheel, though Art was the

maddest feller you ever saw."

"Well, it's a shame to have your wheel smashed after you worked so hard for it," said Dick. "What did you do with your other wheel—the one you had before you got this one?"

"I sold it. It wasn't much good, anyhow, and it only cost me nine dollars second-hand. But I earned all the money to buy it myself."

"Did you race on your old wheel at the fair?"

"Oh, no! I never could have won on that. Fred Thurston let me have his wheel to race on."

"Well, this bike is ruined, that's plain," said Dick, as he examined the ill-fated bicycle. "You'll never ride it again."

"I guess that's right," nodded Sammy sadly. "But you stopped the horse and saved the girl."

Not a whimper, not a sign of anger, only regret for the loss of the wheel and satisfaction because Dick had been able to save June.

Young Merriwell realized that the boy was something of a hero, with a most remarkable disposition.

"Don't worry, Sammy," he said, smiling reassuringly. "You shall have another wheel, and I will buy it for you—a wheel just as good as this one."

"Pardon me," said a voice that startled Dick and caused the boys to stare as June Arlington herself came from the hotel and tripped down the steps. "I claim the privilege of buying another wheel for him. No; it is right, Mr. Merriwell! My father will gladly furnish the money when he hears how this wheel came to be broken. I'll write him all about it this very day."

"Hush!" grunted one of the boys doubtingly, speaking in a low tone to a companion; "that's a big bluff! That's jest so Sam won't raise a row about it."

"She's trying to make Sam think her father has money enough to buy a fifty-dollar wheel every day if he wants to," said the other, joining in the doubtful derision.

June was forced to smile. Sammy had risen and taken off his cap when Dick lifted his.

"It's plain your friends haven't much faith in my promise," said June.

"That's all right," declared the owner of the wheel. "I believe it, anyhow. Of course, I feel pretty bad over my wheel, but I'm glad the horse was stopped before you was hurt."

June's expressive eyes glowed.

"Thank you," she said. "Did you ever hear of D. Roscoe Arlington?"

"No; I—why, do you mean the big railroad man?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I've heard of him!"

"He is my father, and I promise you that he will buy another wheel for you at——"

"Excuse me," put in Dick. "But I was the one who snatched the bicycle from this boy and smashed it, so it is I who should provide for the loss."

"Not at all," declared June, with almost haughty decision. "You did it while trying to save me from harm, and the debt is mine. I insist, and I shall be angry if you do not let me refer this matter to my father, who will certainly replace this wheel with the very best bicycle money can procure."

Dick saw that she was very much in earnest, and it was plain that June was accustomed to have her own way in most things. He was obliged to yield gracefully.

June borrowed a pencil and piece of paper from Dick, after which she noted the answers of the boy in regard to the kind of a wheel he wanted, height of frame, gear, saddle, pedals, and so forth. She was perfectly practical in this, and when she had finished questioning Sammy she was in condition, if necessary, to go out and purchase the bicycle herself and get exactly what the lad most desired.

Dick's admiration for June Arlington grew steadily. He noted that she was perfectly cool and self-possessed, for all of the recent adventure through which she had passed, and that, to a large extent, she was lacking in the frivolity and giggling giddiness that marred the natural charm of many girls near her age.

"If I had the money with me," said June to Sammy, "I would pay you for your wheel right here; but I haven't that much, and, besides, I think it possible you will get a far better machine if you permit my father to select it for you."

"Oh, I'm willing to do that!" exclaimed the boy; "and I thank you for——"

"I am the one to thank you," said June. "You happened along at just the right time to aid in stopping that runaway."

This made the boy feel very good, while some of the fellows who stood near grew jealous and tried to sneer.

June shook hands with Sammy, promising he should hear from Mr. Arlington within a week, and then she turned back into the hotel, telling Dick she wished to speak with him. The moment she entered the hotel the other boys surrounded Sammy. One of them, a raw-boned, freckled chap with dirty teeth, gave Sammy "the laugh."

"You're a soft mark!" he said. "Why, if you'd raised a big fuss you might have frightened her into paying for your bike right off—that is, if her father is the big gun she says he is."

"Go on, Spike Hanlon!" exclaimed Sammy. "What do you take me for? I ain't built that way!"

"Because you're easy. Mebbe you'll get another bicycle, and, then again, mebbe you won't! Soon as she gits outer town she'll never bother about it no

more. You let her soft-soap you and fool you jest because she shook hands with ye! Yah!"

"Now, close your face!" exclaimed Sammy, flushing hotly and showing anger for the first time. "If you say anything more about her I'll soak you in the mouth!"

Which demonstrated that Sam had temper and could be aroused to anger, for all that he had taken the smashing of his wheel so mildly.

At once the boys began to take sides. The majority were with Sammy, but two fellows sidled over and joined Spike Hanlon.

"You hit me," said Hanlon, "and I'll break your head with a rock! That's what I'll do, softie! I'm glad your old wheel was smashed. I'm glad of it, and I'll bet you a hundred dollars you never get another one! Yah, yah! Thought you was big because you beat Art Merritt and got a fine bike, didn't ye! Well, now you ain't no better off than any of us! You ain't so well off, for my brother's got your old wheel, and he lets me ride it when I want to! Yah! yah! yah!"

But Hanlon had carefully placed himself at a distance by walking away in a sidelong fashion, and he took to his heels, whooping and laughing scornfully as Sammy made a move as if to rush at him.

"Don't you mind, Sammy," said one of the friends who had sided with him. "Spike's jealous. He's been so ever since you won your bike. And I think you'll get a new wheel all right."

"I know it!" said Sam, with the utmost confidence. "That girl's all right, and I'd bet my life she'd have the wheel sent to me! Then won't Spike feel sick!"

CHAPTER V—DICK KEEPS THE LOCKET

Up one flight in the hotel was a window in the hall at the front of the house. Dick and June passed by this window, which, although closed, did not prevent them from hearing the words of the boys below, and June laughed when Sammy declared he would soak Spike Hanlon in the mouth if Spike said anything more about her.

"That's the kind of champion to have!" exclaimed Dick.

"They are going to fight!" exclaimed June. "That freckled boy is big and

strong."

"But I'll bet anything Sammy does him if they come to a genuine scrap," said Dick. "But don't worry; there'll be no fight. The most of the boys are on Sammy's side, and the other fellow doesn't want to mix in."

They heard Spike's taunts just before he retreated, and June muttered:

"Just you wait and see what kind of a wheel he'll have! I'll make father buy him the very best in the market."

"Then that other boy will turn green with jealousy," laughed Dick. "It will be a great triumph for Sammy."

"He deserves it."

"I agree with you. He is a most remarkable fellow, and I like him. Evidently he's a poor boy. But he didn't whimper when his wheel was smashed, and that is why I say he is remarkable. Most boys would have put up a terrible outcry over it."

"It is strange that my brother should have been hurt so badly just from falling backward out of the carriage when the horse started," said June.

"Is it a fact that he is badly hurt?" asked Dick.

"I fear so. The doctor told me that, at least, we had not better think of returning to Fardale before to-morrow. He said he would be able to say positively to-morrow whether Chester is badly hurt or not. He is coming back with another doctor in a short time, and they will make a more complete examination."

"For your sake," said Dick sincerely, "I am very sorry that your brother was hurt."

Dick spoke with perfect truthfulness, and she understood him. It is not likely that he would have felt keen regret on Chester's account alone, but his interest in June made it possible for him to be sorry, as the affair had caused her distress.

She thanked him, but she did not misinterpret his words in the least. She understood that her brother and Dick Merriwell were persistent and unrelenting enemies.

"I was so glad to see you win the game to-day," she said, seeming to wish to change the subject.

"Yes, the boys did splendidly."

"They did very well, but you—you were the one who really won the game."

"In football every man is dependent on the others engaged in the game. Without their assistance he would be powerless to win."

"Oh, if you put it that way, of course no fellow could stand up alone against eleven others and win a game. But that does not alter the fact that you were the one who won the game to-day. And I thought you badly hurt that time when I—when I made a sensation by running on to the field," she finished, her face getting very red.

She was confused, and Dick's heart beat a bit faster now. But she quickly found a way to make it appear that it was not purely from agitation over Dick that she hurried on to the gridiron.

"I was so afraid that meant failure for the team! When I saw you down and feared you would have to leave the field, I knew Fardale was in a bad scrape. Without a captain, she would have been defeated quickly."

Dick knew well enough that it was more than fear for the result of the game that had caused her to rush pale and trembling across the field and kneel to lift his head while he lay helpless on the ground; but he pretended disappointment now, seeking to draw her out.

"I'm very sorry," he said, watching her closely; "I fancied you were anxious on my account. I presume it was conceited of me to have such a thought."

She looked him straight in the eyes.

"Doubtless my conduct was such that it gave you cause to think so," she nodded, perfectly at ease.

"Your conduct—and your words," he returned.

She remembered with some dismay that she had been greatly excited as she lifted his head and knelt on the ground. She could not recall the words she had uttered at the time, but she knew she had called him "Dick," and she entreated the doctor to tell her he was not badly hurt. Still June retained her self-possession, although she did not repress an added bit of color that again rose to her cheeks.

"I believe you were shamming, sir!" she asserted, severely. "You seemed almost unconscious, yet you pretend that you heard what I said. I think you dreamed that you heard it."

"Well, it was a very pleasant dream, and it quite repaid me for the jar I received in that little clash."

She could not resist his subtle compliment, and, in spite of her self-control, she felt her pulse thrill a little. Although a girl of sixteen and usually most reserved, she was open to flattery in its finest form, as most girls are.

Dick, however, was no flatterer, and he spoke what he felt to be the simple truth and nothing more. It is possible that his sincerity impressed her.

"My locket——" she began.

"Oh, I hope you are not going to command me to return it to you again!" he exclaimed.

"No."

"I am thankful for that. I gave it up once, thinking you would be generous enough to hear what I had to say; but you refused to see me or to permit me to explain——"

"Which was very unjust of me," she frankly admitted. "I was sorry when it was too late, but you did not come again."

"Because I did not care to receive another snub."

"Will you pardon me?"

"Surely I will, now that I have the locket again. But I do not wish you to believe that I ever dropped that locket intentionally with the desire of having it become known that you had given it to me. I did not think you could believe such a thing of me."

There was reproach in Dick's words, and she felt it.

"My brother made it seem that you did," she hastened to say; "and—and—another would not deny it."

"Another?" exclaimed Dick. "I know who it was! It was Hal Darrell!"

"I have not said so."

"But you cannot say it was not Darrell?"

"I will not say it wasn't or that it was."

"We were enemies once," said Dick, "but I found him pretty square, and I can admire a fellow who is my enemy if he is honest. Later we became, not exactly friends, but reconciled. Somehow we could not get on real friendly terms, though I fancy we both wished to be friendly at one time. Of late he has changed, and I am satisfied that he is once more my enemy. I don't think he will lie about me, but it is possible he might not correct the false statement of another. Miss Arlington, is it possible that, at the present time, there remains in your mind the least doubt concerning my behavior? If there is such a doubt, even though I would dearly love to keep your locket and your picture, I must beg you to take it back."

He was grim and stern now, and for a single instant she felt a trifle awed. Then pride came to her rescue, and she exclaimed:

"If you wish to get rid of it so much, I'll take it, sir!"

"I do not wish to get rid of it. Indeed, I wish to keep it always; but I cannot keep it knowing you might suspect me of showing it, laughing over it and boasting that it was a 'mash.' Do you understand?"

"I think I do," she said quietly. "I shall let you keep it, and you may be sure there is no doubt in my mind. I believe you are a gentleman."

Dick had triumphed. Again he was a winner, and it made him glad indeed. He thanked her earnestly and sincerely, upon which she said:

"Foolish though it may seem, I am certain now that the locket has given you good fortune. I felt sure you would win the game for Fardale to-day after I gave you the locket, and you took it. Then, with the locket still in your possession, you stopped the runaway. Keep it, and may it be the charm to give you luck as long as it remains in your possession."

"I am sure it will!" he laughed. "As long as it contains that picture it will remain a charm for me."

"You know I accept you as a friend, Mr. Merriwell; but my brother is angry

with me, my mother will be more so, and my father will side with my mother. I tell you this as an explanation of my conduct in the future, should anything happen to make it seem that I am unfriendly."

"I think I'll understand you."

"Then you will do better than most fellows," smiled June; "for they do not understand girls at all. Hal Darrell——"

Then she paused suddenly, for Hal himself had ascended the stairs and stopped, staring at them. His face was rather pale, and there was a glitter in his dark eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Darrell!" exclaimed June. "I have been looking for you."

"Have you?" said Hal, his eyes on Dick.

"Yes. Brother wants to see you. He's in room 37. Please go right up."

Hal stood still and stared at Dick a moment longer, after which he mounted the stairs to the second story and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI—A DOUBTFUL MATTER

Chester and June Arlington remained in Hudsonville that night and the next day. On Monday they came back to Fardale, but Chester did not return to the academy. He declined to go to the house where June had been stopping, but ordered the best suite of rooms in the Fardale Hotel, and there he went comfortably to bed.

Perhaps it was a mistake to say he went comfortably to bed, for he was far from comfortable, as his back had been hurt badly, although the Hudsonville doctors consoled him with the assurance that, with rest and proper treatment, he would recover without any permanent injury.

June remained at the hotel to care for him as best she could, and Mrs. Arlington was notified of his misfortune, with the result that she lost no time in hastening to the side of her idolized son.

Dick had called at the hotel to see June a moment, and she showed him the telegram that told her that her mother was coming with all speed.

"I don't know what will happen when mother gets here," confessed June, "but there may be trouble. To tell the truth, I am afraid there will be, for Chester

is determined to tell her I gave you that locket, unless I get it back."

Dick's heart sank a little, but he soon said:

"Then I suppose I shall have to give it up, for I do not wish you to get into trouble on my account."

But she declined to take it.

"No," she said firmly. "I gave it to you, and you are to keep it. I want you to promise to keep it, even though my mother demands it of you."

His heart rose at once.

"You may be sure I will do so," he said.

He was in very good spirits as he went whistling back to the academy. It was just past midday, but the autumn sun was well over into the southwest. The wind sent a flock of yellow leaves scudding along the roadside like a lot of startled birds. The woods were bare, and there was a haze on the distant hills. In spite of the bright sunshine, in spite of the satisfaction in his heart, he felt vaguely the sadness of autumn, as if the world itself were fading and growing old and feeble, like a man that has passed the prime of life and is hurrying down the hill that leads to decrepit old age and death. Always the autumn impressed Dick thus. True he saw in it much of beauty, but it was a sad beauty that made him long to fly to another clime where fallen leaves and bare woods would not remind him of winter.

Not that Dick disliked the winter, for in it he found those pleasures enjoyed by every healthful lad with a healthy mind; but it was the change from early autumn to winter days that stirred his emotions so keenly and filled him with that unspeakable longing for something that was not his.

A stream ran through the little valley, the sunshine reflected on its surface. Beyond the valley was a little grove, where a red squirrel was barking, the clear air and favorable wind bringing the chatter of the little creature to the lad's ears. Some one had started a fire on the distant hillside, and the smoke rose till it was hurled away by the sweeping wind.

Dick's eyes noted much of beauty in the landscape, for he was sensitive to color, and the woods were gray and brown and green, the fields were mottled with brown and green, for there remained a few places where the grass was not quite dead, late though it was; the hills were misty blue in the far distance, and the sky overhead was cloudless.

From a high point of the road he could look out on the open sea, and he heard the breakers roaring on Tiger Tooth Ledge.

The squirrel in the grove seemed calling to him, the woods seemed to beckon, and even the dull, distant roar of the sea struck a responsive chord in his heart. A sudden desire came upon him to stray deep into the woods and hills and seek to renew the old-time friendship and confidence with nature and the

wild things he had once been able to call around him. Then he thought of Fardale, of the football-field, of his friends at school, and, lastly, of—June.

"No," he muttered, "I would not give up my new friends for those I used to know. The birds and squirrels know me no longer, but I have found human friends who are dearer."

He resumed his whistling and trudged onward with a light heart.

That afternoon Dick worked earnestly with the scrub on the field, for the weakness of the academy's line in the recent game with Hudsonville had shown him that injury to one or two players simultaneously might cause Fardale's defeat unless some remarkably good substitutes were ready at hand to go in. And he had come to realize that first-class substitutes were lacking.

The injured ones were improving as swiftly as could be expected, but it was certain they would not get into practice until near the end of the week, and Shannock might not be able to go on to the field for another week to come.

At the opening of the season Fardale had resolved not to play with Franklin Academy for reasons well known on both sides. A year before Franklin had permitted a Fardale man and a traitor to play with its eleven, and the traitor had dashed red pepper into Dick Merriwell's eyes at a time when it seemed certain that the game would be won by the cadets through young Merriwell's efforts.

Brad Buckhart "mingled in" and promptly knocked the pepper-thrower stiff, after which the fellow had been exposed.

But Franklin's action in permitting the traitor to play on her team had angered the Fardale athletic committee so that a vote was taken not to meet her on the gridiron again. But the faculty at Franklin took a hand, offered apologies, regrets, and made promises to look after the team in the future. They felt a keen disgrace to have Fardale refuse to meet the Franklin eleven. The result was that the Fardale athletic committee finally withdrew the ban, and a date was arranged with Franklin.

This was the team Fardale had to meet on the following Saturday after the game with Hudsonville, and to Dick's ears came a rumor that Franklin had a remarkable eleven that had been winning games in a most alarming manner.

To add to Dick's uneasiness came a report that Franklin had hired a professional coach and that there were at least four "ringers" on the team. Dick was not inclined to believe this at first, for it did not seem possible such fellows would be permitted on the eleven after the entreaty and assurance of the Franklin faculty.

Brad Buckhart resolved to investigate. Without saying a word to Dick, who, he fancied, might object to "spying," the Texan paid a man to find out the truth. The result was that, one day, he informed Dick there was not the least doubt but the "ringers" were to be with the Franklin team.

"I can hardly believe it now!" exclaimed Dick, when Buck had explained

how he came by his knowledge. "How can they afford to do such a thing?"

"Well, pard," said the Westerner, "I hear that they're hot set to wipe out the disgrace of last year's defeat, and then they won't care a rap whether we play with them any more or not. That's what's doing over yon at Franklin. I opine we'd better decline to play."

"No," said Dick. "We have no absolute proof that there are 'ringers' on their team, although it is likely your man made no mistake. I shall notify their manager at once that I have heard such a report, ask concerning its correctness, and protest against the questionable men being in the game."

"And then if they are in it just the same?"

"We'll play them," said Dick grimly, "and beat them. After that we can decline to have any further athletic dealings with them."

"Partner, you're right!" exclaimed the Texan. "The only thing I fear is that our team may not be up to its usual form. If it is, we can down 'em, 'ringers' or no 'ringers.'"

No reply came to Dick's note of protest until Friday, before the game was to come off. Then the manager answered briefly that all the men on his team were amateurs and were taking regular courses at Franklin Academy.

"That settles it," said Dick. "I'd play him now if I had proof that he had 'ringers' on his team. Then I'd relieve my mind after the game."

CHAPTER VII—SOMETHING WRONG

Dick knew Mrs. Arlington had arrived in Fardale, and after her arrival he waited in daily expectancy of hearing something from June. He learned that the injury to Chester Arlington was so serious that he might be confined to his bed for two or three weeks. And he also found out that Hal Darrell visited the hotel daily.

Ostensibly Hal went to see Chester, but Dick felt that the real reason of his going was to see June. And Dick was startled to feel a sensation of keen jealousy in his heart. He tried bravely to put it aside, telling himself that June was his friend and nothing more; but it was obstinate and declined to be crushed in such a manner, not a little to his annoyance.

On Saturday morning Dick received a brief note from June, and it fairly staggered him. This was what she said:

> "Mr. Richard Merriwell: Kindly return my locket at once by the messenger who brings you this. I insist on it, and you will do so if you are a gentleman. —June Arlington."

A second time had this happened. Once before June had sent for her locket and Dick had returned it as requested. Then, when he sought to call for an explanation, he was snubbed at the door. He puzzled over this second note, being astonished by it. For had not June urged him to promise not to give up the locket on any condition?

"Is she so changeable?" he muttered, in great disappointment. "I could not have thought it of her! She doesn't seem that way."

He could not express his feeling of disappointment at June. She had seemed like an unusually sensible girl, who would not whiffle round with every shifting wind.

He understood that, without doubt, strong pressure had been brought to bear on June by her mother and brother. She had been commanded to send again for her locket. Chester Arlington was determined that Dick should not keep it, and he would rejoice if it were sent back to his sister.

But had June been influenced so that she really wished the locket returned? Rather had she not been compelled to write the request while she did not wish Dick to comply with it?

He started at this thought, and, of a sudden, he found a way to excuse June. She could not refuse to obey the command of her mother, and she had written for the locket because Mrs. Arlington commanded it. That was the explanation. The messenger was waiting outside the door. Dick turned, walked to the door, and said:

"There is no answer."

"But the lady what give me the note said there would be one," declared the boy. "She said I was to bring back somethin' you'd give me."

"Did she?"

"Yep. An' said I was to be careful not to lose it."

"What sort of a lady gave you this note?"

"Oh, she was pritty swell, you bet! She wore good togs, but she had gray hair, and she looked me over through a glass with a handle what she held up to her eye, and she says, says she, 'Boy, are you honest?' and I says, 'I am, though I know I'll never grow up to be a great politician or a millionaire if I stay so.' She didn't seem to like that much, but she finally give me the paper what I brought to

you, sayin' as how I was to bring back the thing what you would give me."

"Well, there is nothing for you to take back," said Dick. "But here is a quarter for you. Just say to the lady that the article is so precious that I will bring it in person, as I dare not trust it out of my hands."

"All right. Thankee," said the boy, and he hurried away.

A feeling of satisfaction had come to Dick.

"I was right," he exclaimed, with a short laugh. "It is the work of June's mother. But how can I get out of giving up the locket and the picture? June told me to keep it, but if her mother demands it of me I'll be placed in an awkward position."

He was soon given other things to think of, however. The Franklin team arrived in town before noon, and Buckhart, who was at the station to see them, came hustling back to the academy and sought Dick, whom he found in the gym.

"There's no mistake about it," said the Westerner excitedly. "One of their players is Plover, the chap who was barred from the Exeter team because he was a professional. Why, he's nineteen years old, and he's played the game for three or four years. He got into some kind of a mess at Exeter and left school to avoid a disgrace. He's one of the 'ringers.'"

"How do you know this?" asked Dick. "You do not know Plover personally, do you?"

"No, but there was a chap at the station who knew him and spoke to him."

"Well?"

"Plover didn't seem to like it much. He pretended not to know the fellow who spoke to him."

"Who was the fellow?"

"Clerk in Peabody's store, a fellow who hasn't been here very long."

"I'll have to see him at once," said Dick.

"I had a talk with him, you bet your boots!"

"Did you?"

"Sure thing, pardner. Said he knew Plover all right, and that the fellow couldn't fool him. Said Plover was a chap who played baseball summers for money, raced for money, had been pulled up for some sort of crookedness in a running-race, had coached football-teams for money; in short, he made his living by just such things."

"Well, he is a fine fellow for Franklin to run up against us!" exclaimed Dick. "Come, Brad, we'll look up the manager of that team without delay."

But the manager of the visiting team had not come to Fardale with his players, as they learned on hurrying to the hotel and making inquiries.

"He didn't dare come!" muttered Buckhart in Dick's ears. "He was afraid you'd get after him before the game. That's why the onery galoot stayed away."

Dick's face wore a grim expression as he called for Captain Hickman. Hickman and two other Franklin fellows were found in a room. The captain of the team rose and held out his hand to Dick, crying:

"How are you, Merriwell, old man! Glad to see you again! Of course, we'll have to trounce you this afternoon, but that is no reason why we shouldn't be friends before the game—and afterward."

"No, that is no reason," admitted Dick. "As for trouncing us, that remains to be seen; but I am sure you ought to do it with the kind of team you have brought!"

"Oh, yes! we've got a corker this year," laughed Hickman.

"But aren't you out of your class a bit?" asked Dick, while Brad stood by the door, grimly waiting the clash of words he expected would come and eying the two chaps with Hickman, to have their measure in case there was an encounter.

"Do you fancy your team so very weak?" asked Hickman jokingly. "Why, you seem to be doing very well."

"We are strong enough for a school team made up of amateurs, but we may not be able to cope with professionals."

"And 'ringers,'" put in Brad.

Hickman pretended to be surprised and astonished.

"Professionals?" he exclaimed. "Ringers? Why, what do you mean? It can't be that you accuse us of having such men on our team?"

"I have information that leads me to believe you have," said Dick grimly.

"It's not true!" retorted the captain of the Franklin team hotly.

"It's a lie!" said a yellow-haired chap, rising behind Hickman, and stepping forward.

"That's exactly what it is!" agreed the third fellow, as he also rose and joined the others.

"Here's where we get into a scrimmage!" thought Buckhart, with a glow of genuine satisfaction. "Here is where we wipe the floor with three young gents from Franklin!"

But Dick was not there to get into a row.

"Such information reached me a few days ago," said Dick, "and I wrote at once to Mr. Rankin, your manager."

"Well, you heard from him, didn't you?"

"Yes; he answered that the report was untrue."

"Well, that should have satisfied you," said Hickman. "What more do you want?"

"To-day," said Dick calmly, "I have been told that on your team there is a regular professional by the name of Plover."

"Plover?"

"Yes."

"There is no man by that name on the team," said Hickman. "So you see that you have been led astray in this matter."

"Of course it is possible," admitted Dick, "But we have not forgotten last year, Mr. Hickman."

"Last year?" said Hickman uneasily. "What do you mean by that?"

"You should remember very well."

"Why not——"

"Yes, your little trick you played on us. I believe a fellow by the name of Jabez Lynch played with you, and he was a Fardale man at the time. He wore a nose-guard and head-harness that so disguised him he was not recognized; but he did a piece of dirty work that exposed him before the game was over. You remember, Captain Hickman."

Hickman forced a short laugh.

"That was a joke, Merriwell."

"A joke!" exclaimed Dick, his eyes flashing. "Is that what you call it? It was no joke, Mr. Hickman, and you know very well that it came very near ending all athletic relations between our teams and our schools."

"If that is what he considers as a joke," put in Brad; "mebbe he allows it's a joke to spring a lot of 'ringers' on us!"

"Who are you?" savagely asked the captain of the visiting team, glaring at Brad. "What right have you to dip into this matter?"

"Who am I? Well, I'm Brad Buckhart, the unbranded maverick of the Rio Pecos! I'm playing with Fardale, and I allow that I can dip in some. If any of you gents think not, I'm willing to argue it with you any old way you say. You hear me chirp!"

"Have you come to raise a fuss, Mr. Merriwell?" cried Hickman.

"I have come to warn you," said Dick, with unabated grimness.

"Warn us—of what?"

"That you are making a grave mistake."

"Are you going to squeal? Are you going to back out?"

"We shall play you this afternoon if your team is made up entirely of professionals."

"Then what——"

"I wish to notify you, Mr. Hickman, that a thorough investigation will be made. If we learn that you have professionals on your team, Fardale will sever relations with you. There will be no further contests between us."

Hickman snapped his fingers.

"Do as you like," he said. "We'll have the pleasure of wiping you up in the last encounter, anyway."

"Will you?" cried Dick. "Not much! Fardale will defeat you to-day, for all

of tricks and crookedness!"

"Whoop-ee!" exploded Buckhart. "You bet your boots she will!"

Then both boys turned on their heels and left the room.

Dick and Brad were descending the stairs to leave the hotel when something struck Dick's shoulder with a little tinkle and fell on the steps before him.

Dick picked it up, and glanced upward. He fancied he saw a face disappear above, and there was a rustling sound that died away almost immediately. In his hand Dick held a bit of paper that was twisted about an old-fashioned copper coin. He untwisted the paper and saw there was some writing upon it.

> "I shall try to be at the game. See me a moment if possible. Have something to say to you. —June."

"What is it, pard?" asked Brad.

"Nothing much," smiled Dick, folding the paper and carefully putting it in his pocket, along with the coin.

The smile left his face, as at the very door, when he was passing out, he encountered Mrs. Arlington, who had just alighted from a carriage and was coming in. She saw him, and a haughty look of anger and accusation settled on her cold face.

"So you decided to come!" she said freezingly. "It is well that you did. I have consulted a lawyer, and I have about concluded to have you arrested."

"To have me arrested?" said Dick, in surprise.

"Exactly."

"What for?"

"Theft!"

Dick's face flamed crimson, while a gurgle of incredulity and astonishment came from Brad's throat.

"Theft, madam?" said Dick warmly. "Such a thing is ridiculous!"

"Outrageous!" came from Brad.

"I sent for a piece of property belonging to my daughter and you declined to return it," said the woman, with a crushing air of superiority.

"So it was you who sent for it?" came quickly from Dick. "I am glad to know that."

"My daughter wrote the note, which I sent by a messenger. Your refusal to return the locket makes you a thief. But I presume you have come to your senses and decided to give it up, in which case I shall not proceed against you."

Dick was boiling with anger, and he longed to tell the woman just what he thought; but he could not forget that she was June's mother, which held him in check.

"I did not call to return the locket, madam," he said. "I had another matter that brought me here."

"Indeed?" said the woman, annoyed and surprised. "You will find it best to attend to this matter without delay if you wish to escape the unpleasantness of being arrested. To a boy of your callous nature I do not suppose arrest would seem like a disgrace, but you may fear imprisonment."

Dick could not find words to retort to this insult, but he knew he could not restrain his outraged feelings much longer, for which reason he sought to pass the woman at once and get away from her. But Mrs. Arlington had not played all her cards. She was holding one in reserve.

"I think you were somehow concerned in stopping a horse that had become frightened in a neighboring town, and I also think my daughter was in the carriage," she said, in the same haughty, freezing manner. "Much to my regret, I have learned that my son failed to pay you for your act, as he promised to do; but you know he was injured by falling from the carriage, which explains his failure. I have been told that he said he would give you a hundred dollars to stop the horse. I always take pains to have my son keep his word, and I shall do so in this case. When you call with the locket you shall have the hundred dollars, just as he promised."

Dick knew she felt sure the promise of that money would cause him to hasten to bring the locket, and it but added to his outraged sense of fairness. Surely she was the most overbearing, haughty, cold-blooded woman he had ever met! But she was June's mother!

"Madam," he said, "if you imagine for a moment that I stopped that horse because a hundred dollars was offered to any one who would do so, you have made a great mistake. I did so because your daughter was in peril. Nothing could induce me to accept money from your son, from you, or from any one on earth for such an act!"

He managed to pass her, but Buckhart paused to say:

"Well, I should opine not! Why, confound it! I told you once that this yere pard of mine has money enough to buy up your old husband's railroads and run 'em! Money! Why, when he comes of age he'll have it to burn in an open grate instead of coal! Money! Don't insult him by——"

"Brad!" said Dick sharply; "that will do! Come!"

"All right," said Buckhart, regretfully following young Merriwell. "But I wasn't half done with her. I was just getting round to say over my opinion of her, and I reckon I'd sure rumpled her fur some."

"Never mind," said Dick. "We've got other things to think of besides that woman."

"Don't you worry none whatever about arrest," said the Texan. "She'll not

be that big a fool."

"I hope not," said Dick.

As Dick said, he had other things to occupy his mind. He was bound to win the game that afternoon and teach Franklin a lesson.

Midday had passed and Dick was entering the gymnasium to prepare for the game when a boy on a bicycle hailed him. He stopped, frowning a little as the boy came up swiftly, for he half-fancied it was some one sent by Mrs. Arlington. As the lad drew near, however, Dick suddenly recognized him. It was Sammy—Sammy of Hudsonville, on a brand-new wheel! Sammy was laughing as he jumped off.

"I wanted you to see the wheel Mr. Arlington sent me in place of the old one," he said. "I've ridden over here on it to thank Miss Arlington and to see the football-game. I'm going to root for you in the game. Say, ain't this wheel a peach?"

"It is very handsome," said Dick. "It seems to be quite as good as your other one."

"Oh, it's better! A machinist over in our town says it's the best he ever saw, and he knows a good one when he sees it."

"I congratulate you, Sammy," said Dick. "I'm very glad you got the wheel all right and like it."

"Oh, I like it! Say, you're going to do them Franklin fellows, ain't you? They beat our team, and they think they are the real stuff. I'd give anything to see you do 'em up."

"All right," smiled Dick. "Keep your eyes open this afternoon, Sammy."

CHAPTER VIII—FARDALE'S WAY

In some respects the first half of the game that day was like the first half in Hudsonville. Franklin had the heavier team, and it kept the ball in Fardale's territory fully three-fourths of the time. The first touchdown was made by Franklin with such ridiculous ease that the watching cadets groaned in despair. But Dick managed to put enough fight into his team to enable it to withstand the further assaults

of the enemy, and the half ended with the ball on Fardale's ten-yard line.

Chester Arlington was not on hand to witness the game, but the rest of the Wolf Gang, composed of cadets who hated Dick Merriwell—Mark Crauthers, Fred Stark, Sam Hogan, and Bunol, the Spanish boy—were there and rejoiced. These fellows did not dare show their satisfaction openly, but they expressed it to one another.

Sammy of Hudsonville was disappointed, but he kept up his cheering for Fardale and for Dick Merriwell right through to the end of the half.

"What are you yelling for?" asked a man roughly. "Fardale is getting beaten."

"That's all right," said Sammy. "I've seen them fellows play before. I saw them play last Saturday, and they crawled out of a worse hole than this. You can't keep Dick Merriwell from winning."

"You seem to be stuck on Dick Merriwell?"

"I am. He's all right, you bet! I'll bet a hundred dollars he wins this game!"

"I'll take you," said the man. "Put up your hundred dollars."

Sammy gasped.

"I—I ain't got a hundred dollars," he said; "but I've got a brand-new bike that cost pretty near that, and I'll bet that."

The man laughed.

"I don't want to rob you of your wheel," he said, "so we won't bet."

"Don't you be afraid of robbing me!" exclaimed the boy. "But I think you need your money, so you hadn't better bet."

Dick had looked in vain for June Arlington. She had said she would see him that afternoon, but he was sure she was not in the stand where most of the ladies were assembled.

"Her mother would not let her come," he decided. "I'm sorry. I believe we could do better if she were here. But we must win this game, anyhow."

After his usual manner he talked to his men during the intermission, suggesting little things, telling them where the enemy was weak, working up their confidence and courage, and doing everything in his power to get them into proper condition of mind to go in for the game and take it.

"Plover hasn't made no great stir so far, has he, pard?" said Buckhart. "It was Andrews made that touch-down."

"Plover?" said Singleton. "Who is Plover?"

"The fellow playing left half-back for them."

"Why, that's Gray."

"That's the name they have given him," confessed Brad; "but his right name is Plover, and he's the chap who got into that bad scrape at Exeter last year."

"Why, Plover—he's a professional!" exclaimed big Bob.

"That's what we're up against to-day?" nodded Brad. "Rush and Carney,

their end-men, are 'ringers.' Neither of them is taking a regular course at Franklin. And Wettinger, the left guard, is another. Oh, they've got a scabby team!"

The boys were aroused.

"Let's beat them, hany'ow!" cried Billy Bradley.

"It would be a shame, a measly shame!" said Ted Smart.

"By Jim!" squeaked Obediah Tubbs; "if them fellers is goin' to play that sort of a team they want to look out! Dern my picter if I don't sail in hot an' heavy next half!"

"Everybody sus-sus-sus-sail in!" chattered Chip Jolliby. "We can eat 'em up!"

"Eat 'em! eat 'em!" growled Harry Dare.

So the boys went back on to the field in something of a fierce mood. Franklin had fancied the cadets would be spiritless and easy toward the end of the game, but when they found the home team snappier than ever, they were amazed.

"On your taps every moment, fellows," said Dick. "Keep them guessing."

Fardale did keep them guessing, but Franklin seemed to recover from her first surprise and settled down for a stubborn battle. It was hot work. With the ball down for the first time on Franklin's forty-yard line, the cadets could not make a gain, and were forced to kick. Hickman ran back in anticipation of the kick, which he took prettily, and the Fardale rushers were blocked long enough to give him a start, which he improved.

Down the field came the captain of the visiting team. Two of his men turned in with him as interferers and blocked first one and then another of the Fardale tacklers. Hickman was covering ground handsomely and had reached the middle of the field before Darrell closed with him and dragged him down,

"Great! Great work, Hal!" panted Dick, in admiration. "I was afraid you'd miss him."

Hal said not a word.

Franklin had done a clever bit of work, and she was determined to improve it now. The ball was snapped and passed to Gray, who went across and plunged into the right wing of Fardale's line, hitting Jolliby hard and going through for four yards.

Again Darrell was in the play and stopped the runner.

Andrews, the right half-back, took the ball next time and went at the right side of Fardale's line.

The forwards ripped open a hole for him and he slipped through, but Dick Merriwell hooked on to his legs and pulled him down. This time, however, full five yards had been made.

"Got to stop it, fellows!" breathed Dick.

Franklin was full of confidence.

"Get 'em going, boys!" said Hickman. "They'll never be able to stop us."

But an attempted end run resulted in a loss of three yards, as the runner tried to dodge back to avoid a tackler. Dick was certain a plunge into the line would follow.

"20—23—2," called Quaile, the quarter-back.

Dick was not mistaken. Hickman came plunging right into the line, and he was met and held in handsome manner. Now something must be done.

The cadet band was playing "Fardale's Way," and a great mass of cadets took up the song. The words seemed sufficient to encourage the desperately fighting lads.

"It's no use groaning, it's no use moaning,
    It's no use feeling sore;
Keep on staying, keep on playing,
    As you've done before;
Fight, you sinner, you're a winner
    If you stick and stay;
Never give in while you're living—
    That is Fardale's way."

It was a song to stiffen the backs of those lads. It seemed to do its work, for again Franklin was held fast without a gain.

Singleton ran back in anticipation of a kick, which the visitors apparently prepared for. But the preparation was made to deceive, and Gray was sent with a rush into the line, which it was hoped to take unprepared.

What a roar of delight went up from the bleachers when the line held and Gray was actually flung back for a loss! The ball was Fardale's on downs.

The cadets struck into another stanza of the song:

"It's no use trying, it's no use crying,
    It's no use raising Cain;
We don't fear you, we'll be near you
    When you come again.
When you bump us, what a rumpus!
    We are here to stay;
Then we'll ram you, buck and slam you—
    Good old Fardale's way."

"100—13—88." It was Fardale's signal, and the tackles' back formation was made. The ball went to Jolliby, who tried center. Knowing what was coming, Obediah

Tubbs actually butted the Franklin center over, and Jolliby went through for seven yards. This was the kind of stuff!

"20—102—21—44." It was the signal for the same formation, but Kent was to take the ball this time. Kent went into center and made three yards, but Selden, Franklin's snap-back, stood up against Tubbs in far better style.

There was a slight pause, as one of the visitors was hurt a bit. In that pause Dick glanced hopelessly toward the grand stand. He could see nothing of June.

"She will not come," he thought. "Her mother has refused to let her." Then he went into the game again with all the energy he could command. He was wearing her locket. If she was not there, he had her picture, and that was the next best thing.

Fardale played fiercely for a time, actually pushing the ball down the field to within twenty-five yards of Franklin's goal, but there it was lost on a forward pass.

Franklin went into Fardale savagely, but at the very outset was set back for holding, a thing which delighted the watching cadets. But they made it up quickly by a clever crisscross and a run round Fardale's left end, securing twelve yards.

Franklin realized that it had no snap, and the visitors strained every nerve. After that run round the end the gains were small, but Fardale was steadily pushed back to the center of the field. There something happened.

Franklin lost the ball on a fumble, and Darrell got through and caught it up like a flash. He managed to squirm out of the tangle and started for the enemy's goal.

How it was that Dick Merriwell got through also and joined Hal no one could say, but he bobbed up just as Captain Hickman came down on Darrell with a rush.

Dick hurled himself before Hickman, who pulled him down, and Hal ran on with a clear field before him. The crowd rose up and roared like mad.

Darrell ran as if his life depended on it. Behind him the players strung out in pursuit, but they could not catch him.

Dick Merriwell had made the run and touchdown possible by blocking Hickman.

Over the line went Darrell for a touch-down. This was the stuff to thrill every watcher! Somehow Dick seemed to close behind Darrell, for all that he had been hurled to the ground, and he was laughing.

"Great!" he said again. "Now we're in the game good and hard!"

"You blocked Hickman handsomely," said Hal, relaxing a little. "I thought he had me. Where did you come from?"

"Oh, it was a lucky stab for me, that's all," said Dick, modestly declining to take credit for special cleverness.

The ball was brought out. Darrell was willing to let Dick or Singleton try the kick, but Dick declined to take the privilege away from him. So Dick held the ball, and Darrell lifted it over the bar, which tied the game.

"They can't beat us now!" declared Dick.

Hickman was growling like a dog with a sore ear.

"Talk about rotten luck!" he said. "That was it. Why, we had them skinned to death!"

He kicked off and Singleton returned the ball with a handsome drive. There was some volleying of this sort, and then Fardale attempted a run, but the runner was pulled down promptly, and the teams lined up for the concluding struggles of the game.

Fardale fought earnestly, but the visitors were desperate, and but four yards could be made on three downs. Singleton kicked, and the ball went out of bounds, where Gray fell upon it. It was brought in for a scrimmage, and Franklin came back at the cadets. Fardale's line seemed made of stone, and Franklin was compelled to kick.

Singleton rushed the ball back eighteen yards before being dragged to the turf. They piled upon him like a lot of tigers, and when the mass untangled big Bob lay still and stiff.

Dick advanced anxiously when he caught a sly wink from Singleton and understood that Bob was playing for time in order to give the boys a chance to freshen up for the attack. That gave Dick another opportunity to turn his eyes toward the grand stand. She was not there.

But now, at one side of the field, he saw a carriage, and standing in that carriage, waving the Fardale colors, was—June! How his heart leaped as he saw her there!

"She has kept her word! We'll win!"

But little time was left, and he knew it. In order to win, some fast work must be done.

Dick spoke to Smart as big Bob slowly rose to his feet. Ted called for the center-back play, which was a surprise to the enemy, as Smart looked "easy fruit" when he stepped in to fill the place of the fat boy.

Singleton was behind Ted, however, and he held Selden until Tubbs came like a rushing mountain and crashed into the line. Behind Obediah were Merriwell and Darrell, pushing him on. Ahead of him were others, pulling him ahead. They seized him and sought to drag him down, but he kept on going, making full ten yards.

Three times Tubbs did this, gaining twenty-one yards in all. But the fourth attempt resulted in no gain.

Franklin had discovered how to meet the attack and check it. Dick knew

it was time for something else, and so did Smart. The funnel-play was tried, and Dick was sent into the left wing of the visitors, making a gain of three yards. It was repeated, and Dick dodged out through the side of the funnel, striking right-guard and making four yards more. A third attempt was stopped with no gain.

Fardale was resorting to every stratagem. A wedge was hurled into center, Singleton carrying the ball. As the wedge went to pieces Dick caught the ball when Bob tossed it out to him. He darted to the right, to the left, bowled one man over, and on he went clean to Franklin's thirty-yard line.

"It's Darrell's turn," thought Dick. "He ought to get through for a gain. If we can only keep it up!"

But Darrell was stopped and tackled by Wettinger, who carried him back for a loss of three yards. He tried again, but lost two yards more. Then somebody gave Dick the tip that the half was almost up. It seemed that the game would end in a tie.

A word from Dick. What was going to happen? The cadets were breathless. They stood up and stared in silence. Even the band was still.

"A field-kick!" cried some one.

That was it! Franklin was preparing for it. They saw Dick Merriwell was going to try to kick a goal from the thirty-five-yard line.

"Right through there!" grated Hickman, as the Franklin players crouched and prepared to leap forward like tigers. "Spoil it! spoil it!"

The ball was snapped and passed to Dick, and the enemy slammed into Fardale's line with the fury of so many famished wolves.

It took nerve to kick that goal, but Dick was cool as an ice-cake in the midst of the excitement. He caught the ball, turned it in his hands so it could be dropped just right, and with those ravenous wolves breaking through and coming down on him he kicked.

Hundreds of necks were craned, hundreds of hearts seemed to stop beating, twice as many eyes watched the flight of the yellow ball. On and on it went, sailing gracefully over the bar, and a noise like breakers on a lee shore rose to heaven as Fardale realized the game was won.

CHAPTER IX—DICK WINS AGAIN

Grim, dirty, triumphant, Dick sought the carriage in which he had seen June standing. She stripped off her glove as she saw him coming and held out her warm, shapely hand.

"I'm covered with dirt," he said.

But she would shake his hand, and she gave it a squeeze that he could not mistake.

"You did it!" she said.

"No," he answered; "it was Darrell. Did you see his wonderful run?"

"I had not reached the ground, but I heard several say that you made it possible for him to get the touchdown. I was determined to see part of the game," she went on hurriedly. "I'm glad you did not send that locket back. You know mother compelled me to write that note."

"I thought so."

"I hoped you would keep the locket. You must come to the hotel this evening and see her. There is no way out of it."

"But how am I to keep the locket and remain a gentleman? She has even threatened to have me arrested."

"She won't do that. Come to the hotel to-night. She will see you, and I am expected to demand the return of the locket."

"What will you do?"

"I am going to say that I gave it to you and that I want you to keep it."

There was no time for further talk. Dick promised to come to the hotel at a certain hour, so while Fardale Military Academy was rejoicing that evening he slipped away and set out for the village.

He was well satisfied with what the day had brought forth. Franklin had departed crestfallen, knowing that Dick would keep his word and investigate the charge of professionalism against several of her team. Had she been victorious she would not have cared so much, but now she knew a close investigation would result in the breaking off of athletic contests between the two schools, and she would be left with the bitter taste of defeat in her mouth.

Dick arrived at the hotel and had his card taken to Mrs. Arlington. There was some delay, following which the lady came sweeping haughtily into the parlor where Dick waited.

"I presume, sir," she said frigidly, "you have come to your senses and decided to return that locket."

"I concluded to come here and talk the matter over with you, Mrs. Arlington," said Dick, perfectly at his ease.

"Have you brought the locket?"

"I keep it with me all the time."

"I will take it."

"If you wish to when you hear what I have to say. The locket was given me by your daughter. She gave it to me on the night of her second visit to this place. She attended a mask-party that night and discovered a plot to ruin my arm so that I could take no further part in football this season. It was to be done by means of a poison ring with a cutting point, which was to be worn on the hand of one of my disguised enemies. A scratch from the ring would cause something like blood-poison to set in."

"Of what interest is this to me, sir? I——"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Arlington; possibly you will be interested in a moment. Three of my enemies in school were concerned in the plot, and your son was one of them—your son, who is my bitterest enemy!"

"I will not believe it!"

"I can prove it if necessary. Your daughter begged me not to expose her brother, for she knew exposure would mean disgrace and expulsion of her brother from Fardale Academy. I promised not to expose him. She gave me the charm for luck. I have kept it, and it seemed to give me luck. If you take it from me, if you compel me to give it up, I shall consider that there is no further reason why I should not expose your son."

"Sir," said the woman angrily, "I do not believe a word of your preposterous story! My son is a gentleman, and——"

"Ask your daughter."

"It is true, mother," said June, entering the room. "Mr. Merriwell might have disgraced Chester, but he declined to do so. I gave him the locket, and——"

There was a sudden cry that caused her to stop. It had a most alarming sound. Then came other cries and a rush of feet.

"Fire! fire!"

Dick sprang to the parlor door. Above he saw rolling smoke and a gleam of flames.

"The hotel is afire!" he cried.

"My brother!" screamed June. "He is up there in Room 42!"

"My son!" cried Mrs. Arlington, in horror, and swayed as if about to faint. "Oh, Heaven, my son! Save him!"

Dick waited to hear no more. Up the stairs he leaped. Guests were rushing downward through the smoke. One of them struck him and nearly knocked him down. They were screaming with fear. Pandemonium reigned in the hotel. Outside the fire-whistle set up a dull, awful call to the village firemen.

"Room 42!" muttered Dick. The smoke got into his mouth and nose and nearly choked him.

A kerosene-lamp had exploded, and the fire was spreading with appalling swiftness. It was on the second floor, and Dick knew Room 42 was on the third.

The fire might cut him off, but he did not hesitate to rush up the second flight of stairs, down which a screaming woman and two cursing men tumbled recklessly.

"Room 42!" he thought. "I believe I know where it is."

There was a light in the corridor, but the upward rolling smoke made it impossible to see the numbers on the doors. He reached the front of the house and flung a door open. In the middle of the room, attired in a nightdress, stood Chester Arlington, weak and trembling.

"What is it?" he asked. "Is the hotel afire?"

"That's what!" said Dick. "Come on lively if you want to get out alive!"

Chester started, but his knees seemed to buckle beneath him and he fell in a heap.

"I can't walk!" he cried feebly. "My legs!"

Dick caught him up and rushed to the door. Up the stairs came a flash of fire, and it seemed that the staircase leaped into flames as he looked.

"Trapped!" he gasped, "No chance of getting down that way!"

He fell back and closed the door to stop the draft and keep out the smoke. With Arlington still in his arms, he rushed to a window at the front of the house and flung it up, calling for help.

Down the street came the village hook-and-ladder company. The truck had long ladders upon it.

"Right here!" cried Dick. "Run one of those ladders up here!"

It seemed that the men worked very slowly and awkwardly. The fire-engine came smoking and stringing sparks along the street. A crowd had gathered below. Their faces were upturned and they waved their arms.

"Don't jump!" they cried.

Higher and higher the ladders were run. Dick watched them coolly. He was supporting Arlington, who showed nerve and waited without agitation.

At last the ladder reached the window. The young athlete lifted Chester in his arms and stepped through the window on to the ladder. Below the flames burst through a window and he gasped as smoke and heat threatened to topple him from the ladder. Still he held on and made his way downward. The crowd began to cheer.

"Who is it?"

"A cadet!"

"Why, it's Frank Merriwell's brother! It's Dick Merriwell! Hurrah for Dick Merriwell!"

Down to the ground Dick bore Chester Arlington in safety. Chester's mother was there and clasped her son in her arms. June was there, too, and she whispered in Dick's ear:

"I think you may keep the locket now!"

CHAPTER X—A MASTER OF HIMSELF

"Here he comes!"

A carriage, drawn by a handsome pair of horses, was approaching the academy. In front of the academy was a great gathering of plebes, nearly the entire class assembling there.

On their way from the gymnasium to their room, Dick Merriwell and Brad Buckhart paused.

"What's up?" exclaimed the Texan, in surprise. "What are the plebes doing?"

"Here he comes!" cried some one in the crowd.

Dick's keen eyes surveyed the approaching team and the occupants of the carriage.

"I believe I know what is up," he said, a peculiar look on his face.

"Enlighten me," urged his companion.

"Chester Arlington is returning to the academy, and his class is out to give him a reception. You know this is the day he was to come back."

"Well, blow me if I don't believe you're right!" burst forth Brad. "I opine that he's one of those in yonder carriage. But who would have thought he could pull such a stroke, even with his own class! So help me, I believe nine-tenths of the plebes are here to give him a greeting! I do, I know!"

"It looks that way," said Dick, with a nod. "Arlington has made himself pretty solid with his class."

"How did he do it?" sniffed the Texan wonderingly. "They must be a lot of snobs! Just because he happens to have a father who is a big railroad magnate——"

"No fellow who ever came to Fardale has spent half the money Chester Arlington has spent," said Dick.

"That's right. He's bought his friends by blowing himself on them. Well, I'll allow I don't care for that kind of friendship. It's all off when the money plays out, you bet! Partner, the old hen is in the carriage with him!"

"Mrs. Arlington is there, yes."

"And—and his sister!"

"Yes, June is with him."

"Has he got clean over the fall he took?"

"I hear he has almost entirely recovered."

"He got up mighty quick, it seems to me."

"He did recover much sooner than was expected."

"Pard, I opine he wasn't hurt half as much as he made out."

"I don't know about that. Yes, I know he did not seem to have much of any strength in his legs the night of the fire in the hotel."

"And you never got so much as thank you from the old hen! That shows the kind of stock he sprang from! She pretends to think all creation of him, and she should have gone down on her knees to you; but she's such a cold-blooded old fossil that she couldn't bring herself to thank you as she ought."

"I desire no thanks from her," said Dick grimly.

"What? When only a bit before she was threatening to have you arrested as a thief? Well, if I'd been in your boots, pard, I'd seen that she ate a large piece of humble pie. You hear me peep! I just would! It would have done her good."

By this time the carriage was quite near the academy. As it swung round the drive and stopped, the plebes thronged about it and greeted Chester Arlington with cheers.

Chester smiled at this outburst and waved his hand at them. He turned to his mother and said:

"You can see how popular I am here. Now you can see how it would be if I had a square show."

"My dear boy!" she said. "It is plain enough! Something shall be done."

June Arlington was looking around. She was dressed in a tasty and stylish manner, and she was the kind of a pretty girl to set the plebes to making "goo-goo" eyes. However, she paid no attention to them. Her eyes had discovered Dick and Brad at a little distance beneath the leafless trees, and something like a faint smile came to her face.

"What's the matter with Arlington?" shouted a plebe, waving his cap over his head.

"He's all right!" bellowed the others.

"Who's all right?" questioned the first speaker.

"Arlington!" rose from the gathering in a grand shout.

Chester rose and bowed with all the grace at his command.

"Thank you, fellows," he said. "It does me proud to have my classmates welcome me back to school in this manner. At one time I feared I could not return so soon, but, fortunately, I was not injured nearly as much as was supposed at first, and I am almost all right now."

"We've just said you were all right," reminded one of the gathering.

Chester bowed and smiled again. When he chose he could be very pleasant in his manner, and it must be confessed that he was not entirely lacking in personal magnetism. True, he regarded himself as quite a superior party, but he was wise enough to court popularity with fellows he classed as far beneath his level.

This was not the case when he first came to Fardale. At that time he had been haughty and over-bearing to almost every one, and it had seemed he would soon have nothing but enemies, even in his own class. But he had found, not a little to his surprise, that he was not gazed on in awe as a superior person, that he could not domineer over whomever he chose, and that he was likely to find himself without popularity or power if he persisted in the course he had chosen.

That was not all. He had found that Dick Merriwell seemed to be the acknowledged leader in the school, and Dick soon betrayed the fact that he had no thought of permitting Chester to order him about or even to accept advice that was not to his liking. Dick had declined to take Chester on to the football-team unless he proved his efficiency and fitness for a position. And, therefore, it was not long before Arlington became Dick Merriwell's bitterest enemy.

Then it was that Arlington set about the task of winning as many friends and followers as possible, and he began on his own class. The plebes wanted a leader, and Chester soon secured the position, which he determined to hold at any cost.

Dick Merriwell was generous to a fault, but, not believing in bought friendship, he did not sow his money with a lavish hand. He was more like the general run of boys, and from his behavior no one would have dreamed that on arriving at age he was to come into a fortune of mammoth proportions.

On no occasion, however, did Chester fail to impress on his friends and companions the fact that his father was one of the richest men in the country.

Chester's little speech brought forth a storm of applause, and the boys pressed around him to shake his hand as he stepped down from the carriage.

Mrs. Arlington had seen June looking in the direction of two lads who stood beyond the crowd. She adjusted her spectacles and looked in the same direction.

"Is that young Merriwell?" she asked.

"Yes, mother," answered June. "You said you were going to thank him for what he did."

Chester Arlington's mother heaved a sigh of mingled regret and resignation. Her haughty face seemed to say that it was an unpleasant duty she had to perform, but that she would try to go through it bravely and with the dignity becoming a woman of her station in life. She leaned over the side of the carriage and touched her son's shoulder with her gloved hand.

"My dear boy," she said, "I—er—ah—I perceive that—er—that young man,

Merriwell, yonder. Will you have one of your friends invite him to step over here to the carriage?"

Two or three of the plebes heard her and hurried toward Dick at once.

"Be careful, mother," warned Chester, in a low tone. "He mustn't think he has done too much."

"Trust me, my son," she said, and her face hardened somewhat as she saw Dick Merriwell advancing toward the carriage.

The plebes made room for Dick to pass. He removed his cap and bowed with grace and politeness to both Mrs. Arlington and June. June spoke, giving him a smile.

Mrs. Arlington seemed to hesitate a moment, and then she began, with that same haughty, chilling air that was offensive, to say the very least:

"I feel it my duty, Mr. Merriwell, to thank you for your action in assisting my son to escape from the burning hotel. Without doubt Chester would have been able to descend the ladder alone, but the fact that you rendered him some aid makes it necessary to thank you."

Her words were like a slap in the face. Dick saw June turn pale, and he knew she had not anticipated this graceless act from her mother. Now, Dick Merriwell was not always cool and restrained, but on this occasion he was master of himself, even though he felt that the thanks he had received were as much an insult as anything else. He bowed again.

"If I rendered Mr. Arlington any assistance," he said, "I am glad I was able to do so, for the sake of"—he looked at June—"those who are attached to him."

Chester Arlington saw that glance, and it enraged him. He knew Merriwell had not helped him from the hotel because of a feeling of regard or liking for him, and he believed Dick did it purely for the purpose of playing the hero before June.

What he did not know was that Dick Merriwell would have done exactly the same had June not been concerned in any way. In such an emergency Dick would not have hesitated to go to the aid of any unfortunate human being caught in the fire-trap, casting aside all thoughts of friendship or enmity.

"Oh, I know the fellow!" thought Chester. "He can't deceive me with his mock heroism."

And he did not dream that he was a most ungrateful fellow to entertain such a thought.

"I trust," said Mrs. Arlington, "that in the future there may be no further misunderstandings between you and my son. It seems that at last you must be aware of the fact that Chester is a young gentleman and that it will be to your advantage to treat him as such. I am willing to overlook the past."

"Which is exceedingly kind of you!" said Dick, who could not entirely hide the sarcasm in his voice.

"I think you should be equally generous," declared the woman. "You can see how exceedingly popular my son is here at the school, and it must be plain that it will be to your benefit in the future to consult the wishes of one who has such a following."

Buckhart had drawn near, and he found it hard to keep from informing Mrs. Arlington that where her son had one real friend at Fardale Dick Merriwell had twenty.

"But it's not my funeral," he muttered; "and I opine Dick won't thank me for mixing in, so I'll keep my tongue between my teeth."

Dick said nothing. It was impossible for him to speak the words he longed to utter, so he chose to remain silent.

"I have entertained thoughts of taking my son out of this school," continued Mrs. Arlington; "but have finally concluded to let him remain, even though his superior abilities have not been properly recognized here. I understand that you are in a class ahead of him, and, having been here longer, you are able to use your power to retard his advancement. This I regard as quite unjust, and I hope you will cease to interfere with him in the future."

"Don't worry about that, madam," said Dick. "I assure you that, in the future, as in the past, I will let him alone if he does not trouble me."

"But he is ambitious, and his ambitions here will be readily attained, I am sure, if your influence is not brought to bear against him."

"As long as he seeks to do me no injury, I shall let him quite alone, you may be sure of that."

"Then I see no reason why there should be further trouble. As for this matter of football, of course Chester will be unable to play this season. In fact, I do not wish him to play at all; but he has set his heart upon it, and I never deny him anything."

For that very reason she had spoiled her son, although he was not aware of it.

"Next year," she went on, "he may wish to play. If he remains here, I am sure that, by that time, his superiority will be so apparent that any jealous enemy will be quite unable to balk him."

In plain words, she meant that Dick was jealous of her son, and the idea made young Merriwell smile.

"Here, madam," he said, "no one ever gets on the football-team without proving their fitness."

"I am sure my son could have shown you that he had played on excellent teams in the past."

"What any one has done before coming here does not count; it is what he proves himself able to do here. Mr. Arlington could have come out with the other

candidates and tried for a place on the team; but he seemed to think he would be taken on anyhow, for some reason or other."

"And why not?" exclaimed Mrs. Arlington. "I am sure I do not understand why Chester should be required to take the same chance as any common fellow."

"This is the common fellow's country, madam. If he proves himself worthy to rise he rises, and no power can hold him down. Birth or wealth cannot place one on top and keep him there unless he has the brains and ability to stay."

"I hope you do not mean to insinuate that my son hasn't brains?" exclaimed the indignant woman.

"I am not given to insinuating remarks. If I have anything to say, I say it plainly."

She was offended, for this youth looked her straight in the eyes and spoke without the least symptom of cringing or fawning. Her wealth or social position did not awe or overcome him in the slightest degree. This was something to which she was not accustomed, and, therefore, it gave her great displeasure.

Chester was angry, too, and he said:

"Do not waste further words, mother. You have thanked him, and that is all that is necessary. Good-by, mother. Good-by, June. Wait till you come back to Fardale again, and you'll find out how things stand. There will be a change."

He said this with an insolent look toward Dick, who seemed quite unaware that he had spoken.

"Mr. Merriwell," said June, leaning from the carriage, "I hope you will accept my sincere thanks for your many brave and generous acts. I feel that——"

He lifted his hand, smiling.

"Don't overwhelm me with thanks, please!" he exclaimed. "It places me in an awkward position."

"Then I will say no more. I know you are not one to seek praise and thanks. We may not meet again for a long time, so I will say good-by."

She held out her gloved hand.

"June!" said Chester quickly, "I wish to say a word to you."

He stepped between Dick and his sister instantly, preventing Dick from taking the proffered hand. What he said was spoken in a low tone, and Mrs. Arlington immediately directed the driver to start. So the carriage rolled away, and all Dick received was a smile and parting wave from June's hand. Inwardly he was boiling, and he longed to knock Arlington down.

Chester looked at him, laughed and turned to his classmates, who once more gathered about him.

Brad Buckhart came striding up.

"For the love of Heaven, pard," he hissed in Dick's ear, "let me soak him for you, if you can't do it! I'll make him think he was kicked by a mule! You hear

me!"

But Dick was a complete master of himself, and he took Brad's arm, turning once more toward the academy steps.

"We'll go to our room," he said, in an unruffled tone of voice.

CHAPTER XI—BOUND BY A PROMISE

A number of Dick's friends had gathered in his room to discuss football matters. There was considerable excitement on the team.

"Hi say has 'ow it's a blooming mistake!" excitedly declared Billy Bradley, striking an attitude in the middle of the room, "We 'ave no business to play with those 'owling toffs, don't y' 'now!"

"Oh, dear me!" piped up Ted Smart, who was sitting on the table. "How can you talk so, Sir William! I am surprised at you! Why, they are perfect gentlemen! Think how finely we were used the last time we were in Uniontown! It makes my heart thrill with pleasure to think of that occasion!"

"Huah!" grunted big Bob Singleton. "I suppose you mean the only time we ever were in Uniontown, and that was when we played the U. A. A. that game of baseball last spring."

"That was a fuf-fuf-fuf-fuf-fuf——" spluttered Chip Jolliby, and then he stamped on the floor and made wild grabs in the air in his desperate endeavor to get hold of the word he was trying to utter.

"Whistle, Chip!" cried several, laughing at his comical contortions.

"Whew!" whistled Chip. "That was a fuf-fuf-fuf—whew!—fine old time! Why, they dud-drugged Dick, and we had to fuf-fuf-fuf—whew!—fight for our lives. We all sus-sus-sus-said we'll never go there again."

"They're coming here," squeaked Obediah Tubbs. "We'll jest wipe 'em all over the field, see if we don't. Dern my picter! you watch me sail inter 'em!"

"I'd like to play one clean game of football!" grunted Singleton, his face wearing a look of disgust. "I'm getting sick of this rough-house business. What do you say, Captain Merriwell?"

Dick had been sitting quite still, as he listened to the talk of the others. He

was standing with his elbow against the corner of the mantel-shelf.

"Fellows," he said, "we are in for it, as the athletic committee has decided to accept Uniontown's offer to fill Rivermouth's engagement. We'll have to play the game."

"But that's not saying what you think about it," said big Bob. "Why were you not consulted about this change?"

Dick shook his head.

"I presume they thought it wasn't necessary."

"You're the manager of the team."

"But I do not arrange the schedule, you know."

"All the same, you should have some say about a change of this sort. What?"

"It's settled now," said Dick, "and we'll have to make the best of it. We trounced those fellows at baseball last spring, for all of their tricks."

"Bub-bub-bub-but it was a close sus-sus-sus-shave," put in Jolliby. "They pup-pup-pup-pup—whew!—played all kuk-kinds of dirty tricks to beat us."

"And this ain't no school team," put in Tubbs. "It's a so-called athletic club team, and they kin be as dirty as they please. I'm agin' playing 'em."

"And I!" repeated several others.

"It's too late to back out now," said Dick. "If I had known there was any talk of making this arrangement I would have gone before the committee and fought against it."

"The committee knew what it was doing," put in big Bob grimly. "It knew all about our trouble with the U. A. A. baseball-team, and it knew we had declared we would never have anything further to do with that association."

"For years," said Dick, "Fardale has desired to enter into contests with U. A. A. because of the money there is in it. Eaton has had the privilege, and this school has been very jealous of Eaton. Last spring Uniontown gave us a baseball-game to fill in an open date, and we beat their team."

"Wasn't it a shame!" exclaimed Smart. "We were so sorry to do it!"

"We beat them," said big Bob; "but think of the fight we had! Uniontown is full of gamblers who bet on their team. The Union Athletic Association is not a straight amateur organization, no matter what it claims. It rings in professionals. Its members and officers make money betting on their teams and their men. That is a well-known fact."

"No one denies it," said Dick. "They expected to find us easy, but there was one fellow who took a fancy to put me out of the game, thinking that would make it a sure thing for Uniontown."

"Sus-sus-so it would," asserted Chip, "You were the only pup-pup-pup-pup——"

"The other feller was the 'pup,'" laughed Obediah Tubbs. "He! he! he!

Wasn't that a funny joke!"

"The only pup-pup-pitcher we had," stuttered the lank boy, completing the sentence after a terrible struggle to give it utterance.

"Well, this thug failed to knock you out," said Singleton. "His drug was taken by me by accident, instead of you. And then——"

"And then," said Smart, "he sprinkled Captain Dick on the field with one of those buttonhole-bouquet arrangements that squirts water in your eyes."

"Only his arrangement was not filled with water," said Dick.

"Hardly!" exclaimed Singleton. "He had something in it that made you blind, and you pitched the last inning when you could scarcely see the batter."

"And cuc-cuc-cuc-cuc——"

"Cut-cut-cadawcut!" cackled Smart.

"Cuc-cuc—whew!—caught a hot liner right off the bat, putting out the last man," said Jolliby. "That was what bub-bub-broke their hearts."

"No; it was giving up the biggest share of the gate-money that broke their hearts," laughed Dick.

"We can do 'em again!" piped Obediah Tubbs.

"I think we can," nodded Dick; "but, as Singleton said, this business of playing with dirty teams is becoming tiresome. Franklin had a lot of ringers, for I have learned beyond a doubt that their man Gray, as he was called, was Plover, the professional. The Trojan A. A. tried to defeat us by roughing it, and we have been up against that kind of business generally. It would be a pleasure to play one good, clean game with a school team in our class. It is this slugging, kicking, and general rough-house playing that makes so many persons down on football. At best, it is not a ladies' game, but it is not brutal when properly played."

"It will be a fight from start to finish with U. A. A.," said Singleton. "Those fellows will want revenge for their defeat at baseball, and they will try to get it by knocking the stuffing out of us."

"It's likely you are right about that," nodded Dick; "but we must be ready for anything. We must go into the game determined to win, and I feel confident we can do it."

"Even if we do win," said Bob, "it does not excuse the athletic committee for their blunder in arranging this game. How in the world they came to do it is what I cannot understand."

"I 'eard as 'ow they were divided hon the matter," said Bradley. "John Warwick was against hit."

"And he isn't sore a bit!" grinned Smart, as usual meaning exactly opposite what he said. "He's delighted over it."

"It may be a mistake," said big Bob; "but the report has leaked out that the committee was divided on the matter, and that Warne, the chairman, was com-

pelled to vote to decide it."

There came a knock on the door,

"Come in," called Dick.

Earl Gardner entered.

"Have you heard the latest, boys?" he asked.

"The latest joke?"

"No; the latest news. Warwick has resigned from the athletic committee."

"No?" they exclaimed, in astonishment.

"It's straight goods, fellows," asserted Gardner. "He has taken himself off the committee, and says he will have nothing further to do with it. He has made his resignation in writing, too."

"But it may not be accepted," said Dick, who was very sorry to know that John Warwick had done such a thing.

"It has been accepted already," said Earl. "Why, even now the fellows are beginning to discuss who shall take Warwick's place on the committee."

"Look out, captain!" breathed Singleton. "If they get the wrong man on that committee you'll have no end of trouble, for it will be solid against you. It's up to you to get busy."

There was a heavy step in the corridor and the door flew open and admitted Brad Buckhart, who strode into the room. One glance at Brad showed that he was excited and angry.

"Say!" he growled; "do you fellows know what's brewing round this old academy? Well, I'll tell you. Warwick has taken himself off the committee, and already there is a candidate in the field who is working hard for the place. There is to be a meeting tonight to elect another man for the place, and the man who is after it mustn't have it."

"Why not? Who is he?" breathlessly asked the boys.

"He's Chester Arlington," said Brad; "and that is answer enough why he should not have the position. You hear me whisper!"

Naturally Buckhart was excited. The thought of having Chester on the athletic committee, where he could use his influence in running the affairs of the eleven, was enough to arouse the Texan.

Dick heard Brad's words without the quiver of a muscle. His lips were pressed together, and there seemed a hardening of his jaw, but that was all.

An excited discussion started at once, but every fellow present seemed to feel that it would be a serious misfortune to have Arlington get on to the committee.

"He can't git there anyhow," squeaked Obediah Tubbs.

"He can unless the right influence is brought to bear against him," declared Brad. "He'll do anything to make the position. He'll spend money like water, and

he seems to have a barrel of it to spend."

"But it cuc-cuc-can't be the fellows here will be bub-bub-bought!" exclaimed Jolliby.

"Wait and see!" said Brad. "This galoot, Arlington, is mighty slick, and he'll play his cards fine."

"If he ever gets on the committee," said Singleton, "there is going to be trouble for this football-team. He is sore because he did not make the eleven, and he will raise thunder. Merriwell, it is for your interest to see that Chet Arlington is defeated in this scheme of his."

Still Dick was silent. He was thinking of his promise to Mrs. Arlington not to interfere with the ambition of her son, a promise that had been made in the presence of June and the gathering of plebes about the carriage.

The keenly interested boys decided to go forth immediately and find out "what was doing." They soon left the room, only Buckhart remaining with Dick. Merriwell sat on a chair, gazing at the floor, a strange look on his handsome face. The Texan walked over and dropped a hand on Dick's shoulder.

"Pard."

Dick looked up.

"Well, Brad?"

"This yere is no time to squat on your haunches. You want to get right up and hustle."

"What for?"

"What for? Whoop! Great horn spoon! Didn't you hear me say that Chet Arlington is laying pipes to get on the athletic committee in place of Warwick, who has resigned?"

"Yes."

"Well, burn my hide and brand me deep! Are you going to squat and let that onery varmint get on?"

"I don't think he will succeed."

"Then you don't know him as well as I thought you did."

"He's not a truly popular fellow."

"Is Phil Warne?"

"No."

"Warne is chairman of the committee. Is Olf Stone?"

"No."

"Stone is on the committee. Is Had Burrows?"

"I don't think so."

"He's on the committee, and he was chairman last year."

"But it is different with Chester Arlington."

"How?"

"He is a thoroughbred cad."

"Sure thing; but you saw how he stood with his own class."

"The plebes alone cannot elect him to the committee."

"They won't be alone."

"He has no popularity outside his class."

"But he's got money, and he'll use it."

"I decline to believe," said Dick, "that the fellows here at the academy can be bought."

"Say, when congressmen and senators can be bought at Washington you don't want to bet your pile that fellows here at school are much different."

"Still I will not believe it," said Dick. "I don't care to take any part in this affair, Brad. I have enough to think of without dipping into this. If my friends oppose Arlington they may work against him but I am going to keep out of it."

"That's where he wins! Why, you can go out and defeat him in an hour! Just you go to work against him and you will carry things as you like. But if you sit down and don't do a thing, the fellows will think you are indifferent, and he'll carry them."

Dick was strongly tempted to take a hand in the affair, but again he thought of his promise to Mrs. Arlington, and that held him in check.

"If Chet Arlington gets on that committee," said the Texan, "he'll have you in a step all the time. You hear me shout! He will work against you in every possible way, and he'll have power to hurt you. Why, you know that fellow has tried his best to injure the team! Do you regard him as a fit man for the committee?"

"You know I do not regard him as fit," came instantly from Dick.

"Then it's your duty to get out and hustle to keep him off!" exclaimed Buckhart. "What keeps you from it?"

"My word," said Dick, in a low tone. "I cannot break a promise."

"Is that it? Well, if you made any promise that keeps you from doing your duty now you ought to be lynched! That's good and plain, if I have to fight you for it! Why, maybe your promise will lead you to stop your friends from working against the dog?"

"No; I shall not interfere with my friends if they choose to try to defeat him."

"I'm glad to hear it!" exclaimed Brad scornfully. "Then I'm going out and get into gear. I'll work like a tiger, and it won't be my fault if he gets there."

Brad strode out, slamming the door and leaving Dick to his reflections, which were not entirely pleasant.

"It was a foolish promise!" he finally exclaimed. "I should not have made it, but I did not think at the time that it might put me in a situation like this. I was thinking she meant his honest ambitions, and I would be the last fellow in the world to try to crush a chap who had sincere ambition to get along. I wonder

if that promise really binds me?"

But when he had thought upon it for some time he concluded that he was bound and could not exert his influence to defeat Chester Arlington in this matter without breaking his word.

No wonder Dick was displeased and troubled over the way things were going at the academy. He felt that the committee had made a big blunder in agreeing to take the U. A. A. eleven to fill the place of Rivermouth, and he could not help being nettled because he had not been consulted at all in the matter. He knew the Uniontown team would fight like a lot of tigers for the game, which they would be satisfied to win by foul means, if they could not by fair. In his heart he was satisfied that Fardale would have to put up a fiercer struggle to hold her own than she had against any team for the season thus far, and the fear that she might be defeated by trickery or treachery was far from agreeable. But to have Chester Arlington on the athletic committee—that was what troubled him more than anything else.

"He can't get there!" Dick finally exclaimed. "It is not possible the boys here at the academy will permit it. I'm not going to worry about it any more."

Then he picked up a book and began studying. However, try as he might to fasten his mind on the text, he caught himself wondering if there was a possibility that Arlington would succeed. Who would run against the fellow for the position? It was important that whoever did so should be a popular man. Would the right fellow go into the contest?

At last, Dick flung the book aside and sprang up.

"I've got to go out and learn what is being done!" he exclaimed, seizing his cap. "Oh, June Arlington, why did you ever have such a brother! If you were not his sister it would be different."

CHAPTER XII—A WARM MEETING

There was excitement enough that night when the meeting was called in one of the classrooms to elect a member to fill the place made vacant on the athletic committee by the resignation.

Not all the students at the academy took an active interest in athletics, but the crowd that pressed into the room filled it to an uncomfortable degree.

The friends of Chester Arlington had been hard at work that day, and they were confident that Chester would win. He had resorted to the methods of a politician, many of which are questionable. He had money, and he knew how to spend it to make an effect.

His most formidable rival was George Hardy, and Hardy had never been a popular man at Fardale. Still, it was said that Hardy would carry the day in case Dick Merriwell came out openly and took sides with him. This Dick had been urged by his friends to do.

"No," he said, shaking his head. "Already they say I run the team as I choose, that I have worked all my friends on to it, and that it is not fair. I am going to keep out of this affair and let the boys settle it as they like."

Brad Buckhart pulled hard for Hardy, but he found it difficult to unite Dick's friends on that candidate. It was only by convincing them that Chester would surely win if they did not unite that he succeeded.

There was a third candidate who entered the field late in the day. It was Joe Savage.

Now, Savage was known to be friendly in his talk toward Dick Merriwell, and many of Dick's friends regretted that he had not decided sooner to take a hand in the struggle. As it was, the most of them had been pledged to Hardy by the energetic and wily Buckhart.

Brad had grown confident as the time for the meeting drew near.

"If all the fellows who have talked favorable stand by Hardy, we've got that Arlington crowd buried," he said.

But Buckhart had to learn that pledges and fair talk may not always be relied on, a fact that many a defeated politician has discovered to his sorrow.

The Arlington workers continued their efforts right up to the time the meeting was called to order.

Elmer Dow, who had managed the basket-ball team once, was chosen chairman and mounted the platform. Having called the meeting to order, he suggested that a committee of three be chosen to count the votes, for it was already settled that the candidate should be elected by written ballot.

Instantly Buckhart was on his feet, proposing the name of Dick Merriwell. Somebody hissed. That hiss was enough to start an uproar. In a twinkling it was demonstrated that Dick had plenty of friends—in fact, that the great majority of those present were his friends.

When silence was restored, Dick rose and was recognized by the chairman.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "I think it will be far better to select on that committee those who are not too closely connected with the eleven. For that

reason I must beg you to excuse me from serving."

"No, no, no!" roared the cadets.

"Merriwell! Merriwell!" they stormed.

The Arlington crowd seemed silent. Chester had not failed to note that Dick had not openly entered into the contest against him, although he had expected something of the sort. However, he did not wish to see Dick on that platform.

The outcries showed that the meeting insisted on having Dick serve as chairman of the committee to count the votes.

"Mr. Merriwell," said Dow, "I think you had better reconsider. You can plainly see that you are wanted on this committee, and you will do a favor to the meeting by serving."

"Merriwell, Merriwell!" came from every side of the room.

"All right," smiled Dick. "If I am chosen, I will serve, Mr. Chairman."

Dow put the vote at once.

"All those in favor of Mr. Merriwell manifest it by a show of hands."

"Up, up!" was the cry. "Up hands!"

"It is a vote," said Dow, looking over the demonstration of uplifted hands.

No one doubted it, and Dick was called to the platform. Ned Stanton's name was next proposed, and there was no opposition. Then Brad Buckhart was nominated. This raised another uproar, for Brad had plenty of enemies. A strong opposition was shown at once.

Brad said not a word, but mentally he observed:

"Well, if I'm elected you bet your boots I'm going to serve! I am, I know!"

The vote was taken by a show of hands. Brad's friends came out strong at this, but the vote was immediately doubted. Then there was a showing of hands, while the chairman surveyed the gathering.

When he called for the contrary-minded it was seen that Brad had won, and he was called to the platform. He was given a round of applause as he took his seat with Merriwell and Stanton.

Then Dow got up and made a brief speech, in which he suggested the advisability of getting as good a man as possible for the position. A few moments later, amid the greatest excitement, the balloting began.

"Here are your Arlington votes!" cried a fellow climbing on the seats near one aisle. "Right this way for your Arlington votes."

"Arlington, Arlington!" shouted another fellow, standing on the seats near another aisle. "The entering class must have a man on that committee. It's no more than fair. Vote for Arlington. Here you go!"

In fact, it seemed that fellows with Arlington votes were everywhere, and these votes they urged on every one. Those who favored Hardy were not as well prepared with votes, and Buckhart grew uneasy as he sat and watched the workers

for Chester Arlington getting rid of their ballots.

"If that galoot is elected, Dick can blame himself," thought the Texan. "He might have crushed Chester Arlington with a word, but he would not say that word."

Dow watched the voters closely as they filed past the ballot-box. He had a sharp pair of eyes, and he was looking for "stuffing" and for "repeaters."

"Hold on!" he suddenly exclaimed, closing the box with a snap. "You have voted before, Macomber! That kind of work will not go here, and I want everybody to understand it!"

Macomber tried to pass it off as a joke.

"I believe in voting early and often," he said.

"You may vote as early as you like, but once on a ballot is the limit," said Dow.

Macomber passed on, and the ballot-box was reopened.

"How is it going, do you think?" asked Stanton, of Buckhart.

"Blowed if I know!" confessed Brad, in a low tone. "But I'm afraid Arlington will carry it."

"Too bad!" said Stanton, and the Texan knew for the first time just how the third man on the committee stood.

The entire counting-committee was unfavorable to the plebe who sought a position on the athletic board.

Arlington's friends knew this, and some of them commented on it.

"What kind of a show has Chet got with those fellows to count the votes!" said one.

"He wouldn't have a show if Merriwell was not on the committee," said another. "Merriwell is square, and you can bet your life Chet will get the position if he's elected."

The voting took some time. When it seemed all over Dow rapped on the table beside him and asked if the votes were all in.

"Hold on!" was the cry from the rear.

Into the room a fellow was dragged by three Arlington workers and rushed down the aisle. He was red in the face, but cast his vote, laughing as he did so.

"Here comes another!" shouted a voice.

Another fellow was marched down the aisle by an Arlington worker.

"Bad!" growled Buckhart. "And no one working against the fellow like that! Bad, bad!"

At last there seemed no more to vote, and the polls were declared closed. A few moments later, amid breathless silence, the counting began. Would Arlington win?

Ted Smart, Billy Bradley, Chip Jolliby, Bob Singleton, and Hugh Douglas

were in a group at the rear of the room.

"Dear me!" said Ted. "How slow this is! Why, there's nothing interesting about it!"

Singleton was watching Buckhart's face.

"I'm afraid Arlington has won," he said.

"What mum-mum-makes you think so?" chattered Jolliby.

"Buckhart looks worried."

"Hi 'ave an idea it is very close, don't y' 'now," said Bradley.

The votes had been sorted into three piles, and the committee went over them again. The gathering was pretty quiet now, as it was a time of great anxiety. Chester Arlington seemed confident. He was smiling and serene.

Buckhart was seen making some figures, but Dick Merriwell, who watched him, shook his head and seemed pointing out a mistake. Brad nodded, and then the slip of paper with the figures on it was passed to Dow by Merriwell. Dow rapped for order.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you will listen to your vote. Whole number of votes cast, 238. Necessary for choice, 119. George Hardy has 102; Chester Arlington, 97; Joseph Savage, 39. Therefore, there is no choice, and another ballot——"

The rest of his speech was drowned in the roar that rose. Chester Arlington had not won. Hardy led him by five votes.

"Fraud, fraud!" cried somebody.

Instantly there was a surging mob round the fellow who uttered the accusing cry. Arlington's friends were disappointed. They had anticipated throwing at least a hundred and fifty votes.

"Shut up that fool who is crying fraud!" commanded Chester. "If you don't, we'll get it in the neck sure."

So the one who made the cry was choked off immediately.

Another vote would have to be taken, and now the disappointed Arlington crowd set to work with redoubled earnestness. Chester went among them, assuring them that he believed the count had been fair.

"Then how can you account for our failure to poll the number we expected?" he was asked.

"Simply by the fact, as it seems, that a number of those who took votes and promised to support me failed to do so."

A large number of cadets had remained away from the meeting, but now the workers rushed away to various rooms, determined to bring out every one who could be induced to come. Many a fellow who declined to come, or tried to beg off, was brought along by main force and rammed into the crowded classroom.

"It's going to be a heavier vote this time," said Dick.

"You bet," nodded Brad, who still looked worried. "I opine Arlington will

carry it on the next ballot."

"What makes you think so?"

"I'll bet he has twenty fellows pulling 'em in. If he doesn't make it, I shall be relieved."

"If he doesn't make it this time," said Dick, "his chance will grow slimmer."

"What makes you think so?"

"His friends have secured this vote for him by their hard work, and they'll have trouble to hold the fellows they have dragged in here. Arlington is not really popular."

But Brad grew more and more nervous as the voting continued. The Arlington crowd made lots of noise, and it seemed that the majority of those present must favor him.

As before, Elmer Dow was keenly on the alert to prevent fraud, and "repeating" was not attempted. One "call down" had been given, and that was enough to make the tricky fellows wary.

After a while the voting decreased. Three times Dow asked if all the votes were in, and each time from the rear of the room came a shout for him to hold on. He waited as one last voter was hurried down the aisle by the Arlington workers, and then he declared the balloting closed.

"Arlington has carried it," said Singleton regretfully.

"Hi don't believe hit!" exclaimed Billy Bradley.

"I'm gosh-darn afuf-fuf-fraid of it!" admitted Chip Jolliby.

The gathering watched the counting of the votes, seeing them singled out into three piles. Then there was some figuring on paper, and Dick Merriwell was heard to say: "That's right."

The chairman rapped, but the meeting was silent and anxious already.

"Gentlemen," said Dow, "listen to the vote. Whole number cast, 253."

"Fifteen more than before," said Smart, to his companions.

"Necessary for choice," announced Dow, "127. Chester Arlington has 111; George Hardy, 101; Joseph Savage, 41. Therefore——"

"No vote!" was the shout that went up.

Arlington had taken the lead on this ballot, but had not received a majority over both his opponents. Hardy had lost one vote, Savage had gained two, and Chester Arlington fourteen.

"Arlington!" was the cry.

"If Savage would withdraw in favor of Hardy," said Ned Stanton to his companions on the committee, "it would settle things in short order and knock Arlington out."

Dick Merriwell said nothing, but he had seen a fellow he knew as an Arlington worker approach Joe Savage and say something to him. He had seen Sav-

age shake his head, and then the fellow said something more, upon which Savage looked startled and seemed to remonstrate. At this, the fellow snapped his fingers and walked away.

"Something doing there!" thought Dick.

He was right.

"Gentlemen," said Elmer Dow, "the polls are again declared open. Bring in your votes."

Dick was still watching Savage. He saw Joe falter and look round; then, of a sudden, the fellow stepped up on a bench and cried:

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the meeting, as there seems to be a deadlock, and as it is plain I have very little chance of being elected, I rise to withdraw from the field. At the same time, I wish to suggest that those who have cast their votes for me now throw them for Chester Arlington, as I believe it fair and right for the entering class to have a representative on the committee."

Then he stepped down, but he had exploded a bombshell, and there was consternation in the meeting.

Brad Buckhart had shot to his feet as he heard Savage speak Arlington's name, and now he dropped back, gasping:

"I'll—be—shot!"

"Arlington, Arlington!" was the mad cry that went up.

Brad turned to Dick.

"Partner, am I dreaming?" he asked. "Did I hear straight? Did that onery galoot say Arlington?"

"That's what he said," nodded Dick.

"And he pretends to be your friend! Well, he ought to be lynched like a horse-thief!"

Dick had been astonished, but he was master of himself, and he did not show his surprise.

"It was worked somehow," he said. "I don't believe Savage really wanted to withdraw in favor of Arlington, but he was driven into it."

"Driven? Driven how?"

"I can't say."

"He's just an onery, two-faced——"

Dick's hand fell on Brad's arm.

"Careful!" he said. "Don't raise your voice, old man."

"Give me a gun," growled the Texan, "and I'll sure go out yon and shoot him up some!"

The balloting had begun, and Arlington's friends were working harder than ever.

"We've got them now!" they sang joyously.

The voting was rushed along at a lively rate, and there was no delay to drag in any one. In a short time the chairman declared the balloting over, and then the counting of the votes began. As the members of the committee separated the votes into two piles it soon became apparent that the vote was nearly a tie.

Not all of those who had voted for Savage had swung to Arlington on the recommendation of Savage. Finally the votes were sorted, and a recount was made.

Brad Buckhart was pale.

"He's got it, pard!" he whispered. "Got it by one vote! No, by thunder! He shall not have it!"

Then Dick saw Brad, in running over Arlington's votes, cleverly slip two of them into his palm.

Ned Stanton, however, did not detect the trick.

"What do you make it, Stanton?" asked Dick.

"One hundred and twenty-three for Arlington."

"That's right," said Buckhart huskily. "And Hardy has one hundred and twenty-four."

"Then Hardy wins!" said Stanton, with satisfaction.

"Wait," said Dick. "Let's be sure of this. Let's count them over again."

"What for?" asked Brad.

"Because I want to make sure."

Dick carried his point.

"Brad," he whispered in Buckhart's ear, without looking toward his roommate, "I want you to put back those two votes. Put them back, or I shall have to expose you!"

The Texan turned like chalk. His hands shook a little, and the counting went on.

"By George, we were wrong!" said Stanton, as they finished. "Arlington has one hundred and twenty-five! He wins by one vote."

"Correct," said Merriwell, and he gave the figures to the chairman, whose announcement of the result was followed by a mighty cheer for the victor.

CHAPTER XIII—THE PROMPTINGS OF CONSCIENCE

Brad Buckhart disappeared at once. When Dick reached his room he found Brad there, sitting like a wooden image and staring at the wall.

"Well, old man," said Dick pleasantly, "that was what I call a hot meeting."

The Texan did not stir. From his appearance, it did not seem that he was aware Dick had entered the room.

"In a trance, Brad?" asked Dick.

Still Buckhart remained motionless, staring at the wall, a hard look on his face.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick, stopping in front of his roommate. "What ails you, old man?"

Brad looked at Dick, and there was a mingling of reproach, shame, and anger in that look.

"Why didn't you let me alone?" he demanded. "That dirty dog won!"

"You mean——"

"Arlington—you know whom I mean! He's on the committee now, and he will show you in short order that he has power there. Just you wait and see what he does!"

"But he was fairly elected, Brad."

"Was he? I'm not so sure of that."

The Texan's voice was harsh and his manner toward Dick new and strained. He felt deeply the shame of his position. More for Dick's sake than his own, he had sought to keep Chester Arlington from getting on the committee. Dick had detected him in the act of filching the two ballots that gave Chester the position, and had compelled him to put them back while the votes were being counted again. No one else knew of this, but Buckhart felt that he had lowered himself in the eyes of his friend and roommate.

"I'm not so sure his election was fair," he repeated.

"What do you mean? Why wasn't it?"

"What made Savage pull out just when he did? What made him try to throw his votes to Arlington? There was something behind it, and you know it."

Although Brad had not noted the incident observed by Dick, when Savage was approached by a fellow who seemed to make a demand on him, against which he rebelled at first, but to which he finally succumbed, still the Texan had sense enough to reason it out that there had been an unusual cause back of the action of Savage in stepping out in favor of Arlington at that critical juncture.

"What do you think there was behind it?" asked Dick, curious to learn Buckhart's opinion on the matter.

"Crookedness, crookedness!" exclaimed the Westerner, rising to his feet and beginning to tramp up and down the room. "I know it! I'm sure of it! I was sure of it all the time," he went on, eager to say something to make his own act seem

less heinous. "That is why I was determined that Arlington should not win if I could help it. I could have prevented it."

"Dishonestly! Look here, Brad, I don't think you realized just what you were doing."

Dick attempted to place a hand on Buckhart's shoulder, but it was brushed aside, and the Texan continued his excited striding up and down the room.

"Yes, I did!" he declared grimly. "I knew I was cheating—I knew it! I meant to cheat! I meant to beat Chet Arlington at his own game!"

"Which would have placed you on the same level with him."

"No! I would have beaten him! Look here, Dick, when you go against a slugging football-team, when the other side plays rough-house, how do you meet them?"

"I try to call the attention of the umpire."

"What if the umpire will not punish them?"

"Well, as a last resort, I give the boys instructions to make the game hot in the same fashion as the other fellows."

"As a last resort! That's it! Do you think I'm a fellow to choose to do a dishonest thing?"

"I know you would not choose it because your inclination was that way."

"But, in a case like this, I would choose it as a last resort. It was the last resort! It was the only way to keep Arlington from winning."

"Then, Brad, if a man robs your chicken-coops persistently, you know he robs it, yet you cannot get proof to punish him by the aid of the law, you think it just that you should turn about and rob his chicken-coops, thus making yourself a hen-thief, just to get square with him?"

Buckhart was staggered for a moment, but he recovered quickly.

"Oh, that doesn't apply! That is a different degree of retaliation."

"Then your application does not fit a football-game. Brad, you know it is not right to meet dishonesty with dishonesty. That is not the way to combat it."

"It's about the only way to combat it successfully."

"I don't know about that."

"You'll find it is."

"I don't believe any fellow can afford it, Brad."

"Afford it?"

"Yes."

"Why, what——"

"Every little dishonest thing a chap does weakens his moral nature. It is not often a burglar becomes a burglar at a single step. He descends to that level by degrees. He does some little crooked act in the first place; then he does something worse, and step by step he goes down the hill, until at last he is a thorough

criminal."

"Great goodness!" exploded Brad. "You didn't fancy I was taking my first step in crime, did you?"

"No; but I knew it was not right, even to defeat an enemy. I knew you would regret it afterward."

"Not by a blamed sight! You were plumb wrong there, Dick!"

Dick shook his head.

"I was right," he said, with positive assurance. "I sought to save you from the secret shame you must have felt in future when you thought of it."

"Secret shame. How do you know I——"

"I'll tell you how I know. Any fellow is liable to slip once. I did, Brad."

"You?" gasped the Texan incredulously. "What are you giving me?"

"Straight goods, old man. Once on a time I did a mean and dishonest thing."

"I can't believe it!"

"It is true. I did it impulsively, and no one but myself ever knew about it. It was not anything of great importance, but, when my blood had cooled and I came to realize just what I had done, I felt like a criminal. I suffered such intense shame and anguish as I have never known at any other time. I resolved to make reparation, but circumstances placed it beyond my power to do so, and to this day I have the unpleasant memory of wronging a fellow being. It taught me my lesson, Brad. It does not pay for a fellow to stoop to anything of the sort, no matter how petty."

This confession from Dick's lips made Brad feel better. Why, here was Dick, who had detected him on the point of filching the votes—Dick had been tempted and had fallen. Dick was not holding himself coldly above Brad as his moral superior; instead, he freely acknowledged that he had stumbled.

Buckhart's feelings about the affair began to undergo a change. A little while before he had been thinking of his roommate as looking down on him in pity from a moral height far above him; but now Dick had made it plain that he had no thought or desire to exalt himself in the least.

"You may be right," said Brad.

"I know I am," came positively from Dick's lips. "You will see it in the same light when you are cooler. Besides, there was another reason why I could not afford to let you get rid of those votes."

"What other reason?"

"I saw you—I knew what you had done."

"Well?"

"With that knowledge, had I permitted you to work the scheme, I should have been just as guilty as you. It was to save myself from regret and shame, as well as you, that I told you you must put the votes back."

This confession drew Brad still closer to his friend. In all these things Dick was perfectly honest with his companion, and the Texan trusted and relied in him.

"I never thought of it that way," he said.

"But you see I am right," said Dick. "I was compelled to ask you to put the votes back in order to save my own feelings."

"Then, if you had not seen me——"

Dick interrupted with a laugh.

"Why, I should have known nothing about it. But," he added soberly, "I am glad I saw you, even though Arlington won."

"Well," acknowledged the Texan, brought round at last, "I believe I am glad of it, too; but it was a howling shame to have that greaser get on the committee! It was, I know!"

CHAPTER XIV—ARLINGTON SHOWS HIS HAND

The football-team soon began to feel the hand of Chester Arlington. He sent men out to practise and directed that they should be tried on the regular team. And he seemed to have the athletic committee behind him, for they backed up his demands. Two of these men, Peter Hicks and Rufus Hoyt, knew something about football and played fairly well.

Dick chafed, for he saw that serious trouble was brewing. He saw that Arlington would try to manage the team through the committee, and that was just what Dick determined he should not do.

"It's a fight, pard," said Brad Buckhart. "Mark what I say, you'll have your troubles with that galoot right along."

Phil Warne was chairman of the committee. In the past he had permitted Dick to run the team on the field just about as he pleased. Now, however, he advised a shifting about of the team and trying them in other positions.

Dick felt that this was more of Arlington's work, for Warne was not the fellow to dip in like that without being put up to it by another.

A feeling of uncertainty and restlessness attacked the team. Dick feared the men were lacking confidence. They had relied on him in the past, and now they

saw that he was being ordered about. They had talked over the game with U. A. A., and were almost unanimous on the folly of playing it. What was there to gain by it? The committee had arranged to have the game take place in Fardale. If it had been arranged to play in Uniontown on the same terms as the baseball-game was pulled off, they might have urged that winning the game would bring in a large amount of money. But they had agreed to pay U. A. A. a sum of money to come and play the game, which made it almost a settled thing that it would be a financial failure.

U. A. A. had vowed to get revenge on Fardale for defeat in the baseball-game. Now it was said that the Uniontown men were anxious to get up against the cadets and "soak 'em."

It was not to be a game between schools, and so the school spirit was lacking. Neither team regarded the other as a rival in its class. There was no rivalry of a friendly nature.

Some of the boys threatened to rebel, but Dick talked to them and convinced them that it was best to play the game. He knew Arlington would make a great to-do about it, saying he was afraid to play, if the Fardale boys declined to meet the chaps from Uniontown.

Saturday came, and an early train brought the Uniontown players into Fardale. Some of the boys from the academy were at the station to see them arrive and to size up their antagonists. Buckhart was one of these, and he hastened back to the academy, seeking Dick, whom he found in the gymnasium.

"Pard," he said, "guess who's in town?"

"I thought you hailed from Texas?"

"Well, so I do."

"But this guessing-racket is a Yankee trick."

"You can't guess?"

"I don't think I can. Who is it?"

"Fred Kennedy."

"Kennedy? Who is——"

"Why, pard, you must remember him. He is——"

"Not the dirty whelp who doped Singleton and blinded me when we went to Uniontown?"

"The same."

"Where is he?"

"At the North Hotel."

Five minutes later Dick was on his way to town, accompanied by Brad. They went direct to the North Hotel, which did all the hotel business of the place, now that Fardale House had been gutted by fire, and there they sought Kennedy.

His name was not on the register. He did not seem to be with the strangers

from Uniontown. Those strangers were the "sports" who followed the U. A. A. games and bet on the Uniontown team. They were looking for bets, and they hailed the appearance of Dick Merriwell.

"Tell us where we can get some of our good money up," said one of the team. "We're betting two to one on U. A. A. Have you children at the academy got any dough you wish to lose?"

"No," said Dick quietly. "Few of us bet on these games. When we do bet it is for sport, not for profit. Can any of you gentlemen tell me where I can find Mr. Kennedy?"

"Kennedy? Kennedy? What Kennedy?"

"Fred Kennedy."

"From our place? Oh, he isn't with us."

Kennedy was not found, but Buckhart was still certain he had arrived in town, even after they turned back toward the academy.

"He's here, pard," asserted the Texan. "I never make a mistake in faces. That onery whelp stepped off the train, or I'm a Chinaman! You hear me chirp!"

"I should like to meet him!" said Dick.

"And I'd enjoy being with you, pard. There would be something doing, you bet!"

The gamblers from Uniontown found takers for their bets in Fardale, as the villagers had great confidence in the academy team, which had not met defeat while under command of Dick Merriwell. Odds of two to one seemed like a good thing and were gobbled up.

At one o'clock p. m. Dick Merriwell received a shock. He was sent for by the athletic committee, which was in session at the time. When he appeared before them, Phil Warne said:

"Mr. Merriwell, we have concluded that, while you have done splendidly with the eleven, you have not been playing the men in just the right positions. Besides," he went on swiftly, not permitting Dick to speak, "there are two men on the team who are not strong men, and we have concluded to drop them off for this game and try the experiment of supplying their places. We do this now because this is not a game with a school eleven, and we can better afford to experiment than at any other time. If we find we have improved the team, we shall be very glad. But we insist that the team be given a fair trial as we have arranged it, no changes being made until we give you permission, save on account of injuries. Here is the line-up of the team, with the names of substitutes to be used, if substitutes are required."

There was a strange look on Dick's face as he took the paper from Warne's hand and glanced over the line-up of the team. His cheeks flushed and his eyes gleamed.

"Gentlemen of the committee," he said, his voice distinct but low, "I need not say that I am surprised at your most surprising action. I think you are making a big mistake and are exceeding the bounds of your authority. It is not necessary to call attention to the fact that Fardale has not lost a game this season. Up to this time the making up of the team has been left almost wholly to me. In taking this privilege out of my hands you have handicapped me greatly, making it impossible for me to work to the best advantage. I think the mistake is liable to prove fatal. The shifting about of these players I consider ill-advised, the dropping of Kent and Dare weakens the line, and, on the whole, the team as given here will go on the field to-day greatly weakened."

Chester Arlington had listened, his lips curling and his eyes expressing contempt. When Dick finished, Chester turned to Hadley Burrows, observing loud enough for the captain of the eleven to hear:

"Didn't I say he could insult the committee! He has had things his own way altogether too long."

Instantly Dick's anger flashed like powder to which a match has been touched.

"You, Arlington, are the cause of it all!" he exclaimed, pointing straight at Chester. "And you are doing it not for the good of the eleven, but to annoy and injure me! I know you, and I know your methods. Yet but for me you would not be on that committee now!"

"What?" cried Chester, astonished. "But for you?"

"Exactly."

"Bah! You would have kept me off the committee had you dared! I believe you did try to! I believe you did get rid of some of my votes on the first two ballots. You knew you were watched too closely for it the last time, and you didn't dare try it."

Dick actually laughed.

"Why, you poor, mistaken duffer!" he exclaimed, unable to fully control his tongue. "It's surprising how little you really know about the truth!"

"Duffer!" snarled Chester, springing up. "Gentlemen, are you going to permit this? It's an insult to the entire committee!"

"Mr. Merriwell," said Warne severely, "your language is offensive to us all. If you are not satisfied with what we have done, if you do not care to follow our instructions thoroughly——"

"What then?"

"You may resign from the team. Another captain will be appointed in your place."

In his intense anger Dick came near making a mistake and playing into the hands of Arlington. It was on the tip of his tongue to utter his resignation, when

he saw Chester leaning forward, breathless, expectant, eager. Instantly the rush of blood to Dick's head ceased, his heart seemed to stop its wild hammering, his pulse dropped back to normal, and he was master of himself.

"No, Arlington!" he exultantly thought, "I'll not do it! You have failed in this.

"I'll stick by the team," he said aloud. "I could not think of deserting it now."

Warne seemed relieved, while Arlington was plainly disappointed.

"Very well," said the chairman, dismissing him with a gesture. "You have your instructions."

CHAPTER XV—DETERMINED DICK

The first half of the game was over. The score at the end of the half stood U. A. A., 18; Fardale, 6.

Fardale's one touch-down and goal had been made on a fluke.

The teams had lined up as follows:

This was a great change about on the home team from the regular order. Buckhart had been taken off left end and given Darrell's position at half-back, while Darrell was dropped entirely. Lewis, a plebe, had been substituted for Buckhart. Merriwell, Singleton, Smart, and Tubbs were the only men who held their positions. Bradley had been shifted from right guard to left tackle, Shannock had been removed from right end to left guard, Jolliby had moved over from right tackle to right end, Earl Gardner had been given Bradley's position as right guard, and these things had served to break the team up completely, quite taking the confidence out of it.

Gardner had made the run with the ball, which he secured on a bad pass and a fumble, and his had been the glory of Fardale's only touch-down. It seemed that Uniontown had the game "on ice."

The visitors had played a rushing, thumping, rough-house game. At first the cadets had met them in this business, but they lost spirit when Uniontown kept the ball in the territory of the home team nearly all the time, seeming altogether too heavy and strong.

FARDALE		SPRINGVALE
Jolliby	Right end	McElroy
Hoyt	Right tackle	Kerns
Gardner	Right guard	Seaton
Tubbs	Center	Redmond
Shannock	Left guard	Hicks
Bradley	Left tackle	Clack
Lewis	Left end	Iott
Smart	Quarter-back	Loppinger
Merriwell	Right half-back	Waldron
Buckhart	Left half-back	Chase
Singleton	Full-back	Durkee

Dick was desperate. He was determined to do something to bring about a change. With the team as it was, he had small hopes of winning. Strangely enough, all through the first half, for all of the rough tactics of the visitors, no man was knocked out so that he was forced to retire from the game.

Brad walked off the field by Dick's side when the half was over. The gym was near enough for the men to run over to it, and this they did.

"The jig is up, pard," said Buckhart. "They've got us! And it is all the work of that dirty dog Arlington! He has ruined the team! I swear it would have been better if I had cheated and kept him from getting on the committee!"

Dick did not seem to hear Buckhart's words. He was thinking swiftly just about then.

"We must win this game! I am determined to do it!" he muttered.

"No matter how determined you are," said Brad, "you can't do it with this team as it stands."

Dick heard this, for he nodded. Reaching the gym, Dick found two fellows ready to give him a rubbing if he wished it.

"We'll cut it out," he said. "You fellows go for Hal Darrell. Bring him here."

Then he turned to Brad, asking:

"Dare, Kent, and Bradley are with the substitutes, are they not?"

"Sure."

Darrell was found in a minute or so, and brought into the gym.

"Hal," said Dick, "do you want us to win this game?"

"Sure thing," said Hal.

"Well, I want you to know that I did not drop you from the team. I was given orders by the committee to play the team just as it lined up to-day. Arlington is the man who did this."

Hal shrugged his shoulders.

"I want you to get into your rig," said Dick. "Will you do it?"

"Are you going to play me?"

"Yes."

"In defiance of the committee?"

"Yes!"

"I'll be on hand."

Dick sent for Bradley, Dare, and Kent, with all of whom he talked.

Just as the team was leaving the gym for the field, Arlington and Warne came hurriedly into the place.

"Just in time!" exclaimed Warne.

"Go on, fellows," said Dick. "I will be with you in a moment."

At the same time he made a gesture to Buckhart. Brad was surprised. He did not quite understand, but he hurried the others out and followed them.

"In this final half," said Warne, "there is one thing we want you to do, Merriwell. Of course, you can't expect to win, as that team is much older and heavier, but——"

"I must have dropped it in the shower-room," said Dick, pretending to be searching for something. "I've got to have it. And I must be out on the field in two minutes. If you fellows have anything to say, come on and say it while I'm searching."

He ran into the room where the boys took their shower-baths. There was a plunge in the same room.

Warne and Arlington followed. Dick seemed to be searching, looking swiftly about, his eyes on the floor.

"As I was saying——" resumed Warne.

He got no further. Out of the room darted Dick, and the heavy door banged, shutting in Chester Arlington and the chairman of the athletic committee. Outside there was a heavy bolt, which Dick shot into place.

"Say on, Warne!" he exclaimed exultantly and defiantly; "but I can't stop to listen. I can't afford to be bothered by this committee during the last half of the game."

He hurried from the now deserted gymnasium. As he was leaving he heard his astonished captives banging on the door of the bathroom and shouting for him to open it.

"Pound away! Yell away!" he said. "I think there will be sufficient noise on the field so that your cries will not be heard for a time, at least."

He ran from the gym toward the field, and was just in time to go out with the team.

When the disappointed cadets saw the team go on the field for the second half they started up and showed interest, for there had been a big change. With a single exception, the old players were back in their regular positions.

Kent, who had not entirely recovered from injuries received in a previous game, was not at left tackle, although he was waiting among the substitutes. Gardner filled his place. Gardner was not quite large enough for guard, but he was so very fast that Dick had decided to retain him in the line. Shannock and Buckhart were again on the ends. Dare and Bradley were the guards, Jolliby was at right tackle, and Darrell assumed his old position at left half-back. Three members of the athletic committee stared and wondered.

"What does it mean?" asked Anson Day. "Why, I thought Merriwell had been given orders to——"

"Where's Warne?" asked Oliver Stone excitedly.

"Where's Arlington?" exclaimed Hadley Burrows. "We must see about this!"

But they looked in vain for either Warne or Arlington.

The cadets were cheering with new life now. Everywhere the red and black was waving. What a difference there was! Confidence seemed restored.

There was a lull as the spread-out teams waited for the kick-off. In that hush and pause Dick Merriwell's keen ears seemed to catch the sound of faint, muffled shouts coming from the direction of the gymnasium, and he smiled grimly.

Fardale went into the game with a whirl and a rush that almost swept Unionton off her feet. The home team had snap, ginger, vim, and go to it. Every man was in the game. They played together, and they were out for victory. Getting the ball, Fardale began hammering against the enemy, at their thirty-yard line. The funnel-play was tried, and Singleton hit the left wing of the enemy, going through for five yards.

The same play was repeated, the funnel seeming pointed in the same direction. Singleton rushed ahead until near what seemed the point of assault, then suddenly darted out through the side of the funnel, where an opening had been made for him, and went through the left wing of the enemy for seven yards. Well, this was the kind of stuff! This was playing football!

A third time the ball was given to big Bob. And now he went forward protected by a wedge that hit the line in the center. The wedge pressed on steadily until the opposing team began to tear it to pieces. Bob saw a tackler coming through, and, with a deft movement, he tossed the ball out to Dick Merriwell,

who had been keeping just back of him on the outside of the edge.

The next moment Singleton was dragged down. But the ball was gone, Dick had it, and he was away like a flash. To the right ran Dick, darting past Iott, who tried in vain to reach him. He circled the end and started down the field.

When Chase brought him down he had made full fifteen yards, and the cadets on the seats were mad with delight.

The Uniontown team was startled and not a little dismayed. Instead of coming out weak in the second half, the cadets were stronger and faster than they had been at the beginning of the game.

The ball was carried into Uniontown's territory and steadily driven down toward the goal-line of the visiting team. Fardale hammered into the enemy with a dogged persistency that was admirable and told of the sand possessed by the academy lads.

Several times through the game Uniontown had resorted to slugging, and now she tried it again. Jolliby was thumped and Dare was kicked in the stomach. The umpire detected the fellow in the act of kicking and gave him a warning, but the kicker said he had not meant to violate the rules.

Still Fardale would not be stopped. Time after time she made her distance, and the ball was forced down to within ten yards of the goal of the visiting team. Then the cadets were set back for holding, and an off-side play lost them the ball when they had the taste of success on their lips. It was hard, but Dick stiffened up his team, and they prepared to hold the enemy.

Uniontown seemed to prepare for a kick. Instead of kicking, however, Uniontown gave the ball to Waldron, while her line buckled down to hold Fardale. Waldron shot forward, rose into the air, hurdled the line handsomely, and made six good yards before Darrell pulled him down. It was a very handsome play, and the visiting crowd had good cause to cheer.

Now Uniontown began to push Fardale back steadily. Now and then, when it was necessary to make a yard or two without fail and Fardale seemed to hold fast, Waldron hurdled. Repeatedly he was successful, and Fardale was driven back to her forty-yard line.

Dick saw that the hurdling was counting against them, and he determined to stop it. He watched closely, and the next time Waldron came flying at the line, the captain of the cadets charged from the opposite side.

With a flying leap, Dick shot upward and met the hurdler in the air above the line. Waldron had not expected this, and he was flung backward for a loss, Dick coming down upon him. The cadets roared their delight at this.

Twice after that Waldron was stopped in the same manner by Dick, who completely ruined the success of his hurdling.

When Fardale got the ball again she marched straight down the field and

pushed it over for a touchdown without being checked at any point.

A goal was easily made.

Dick had a word to say to his men as they spread out for the next kick-off. He was determined to waste no time. Thus it happened that Fardale did not return the kick. Darrell caught the ball and ran sixteen yards with it before being grassed.

The signal was given for the center-back play. The Uniontown players were surprised to see little Smart take the place of the ponderous Tubbs, while Tubbs retired to full-back and Singleton became temporary quarter-back.

When they started to walk over Smart, however, Singleton backed Ted up, and then Tubbs, with the ball, came smashing into the line and bored his way along. They seized him and tried to drag him down, but he kept on for full ten yards before they could stop him.

"Great work!" laughed Dick. "On the jump now, fellows!"

"On the jump!" cried Ted Smart.

It was the signal for the old "ends-around" play. Fardale had never met Uniontown on the gridiron before, therefore the visitors were not on to the cadets' little play of the previous year.

When the ball was snapped the ends and sides of the line seemed to melt backward before the assault of the enemy. The center held fast, while the ends swung round, followed by the opposing men, who were pushing. As they swung round they came in behind the man who had the ball, and he was thrust forward, a portion of the visitors working against themselves without knowing they did so.

Dick kept this play up, working it once or twice by pulling Tubbs back and letting him slam into the line, until the ball was driven down to within six yards of the goal-line. There Uniontown made a stand and held for three downs. But Dick himself went through on the last trial, and he managed to squirm forward after being dragged down so that the ball was six inches over the line when the piled-up men untangled.

Dick was pretty badly hurt, but he succeeded in getting on his feet, turning the ball over to Singleton. Darrell held the ball, and big Bob kicked the goal, tieing the score.

CHAPTER XVI—A FINE PAIR

Uniontown was dazed. The remarkable change in the cadets they could not understand. It did not seem that they were playing against the same team at all.

In vain Durkee talked to his men. They were rattled and sore, and they could not stop the gritty cadets. Fardale made another touch-down and goal, and when the game ended the ball was once more within three feet of Uniontown's line.

Again Dick Merriwell was triumphant, but now he felt that he was on the verge of an explosion. The two captives in the bathroom of the gym would be discovered directly. Then what would happen?

Buckhart reached Dick's side as soon as possible when the game was finished.

"Dick, did you see him?" he asked.

"See whom?"

"Kennedy."

"No."

"He was here."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes; I saw him over there by the gate. I reckon he has taken leg-bail by this time."

Together they looked for the fellow, but Kennedy, if present, had lost no time in hastening away.

The cheering of the cadets at the finish of the game had drowned all other sounds, but Dick pricked up his ear as they drew near the gym. He expected to hear a racket coming from within the building. It was silent as the members of the victorious team entered. Dick wondered if Arlington and Warne had found some method of escaping, but he discovered that the door of the bathroom was still closed. He walked straight over to it and flung it open. The captives walked out, Warne pale with rage, while Arlington's eyes gleamed vindictively.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed Dick, in apparent surprise. "Did I accidentally lock you gentlemen in there? It's too bad! But I am sure you will be pleased to learn that we won the game."

He expected a terrible outbreak from both of the fellows, but in this he was disappointed. Arlington, however, stepped close to him and hissingly whispered:

"I'll have your life for this piece of work!"

"Thank you," said Dick, loudly enough for those near to hear. "I am glad you accept my apology. The score was twenty-four to eighteen."

Arlington passed on.

Warne had not spoken.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" muttered Brad Buckhart, the truth dawning upon him. "That takes the prize! Why, he shut 'em up so they wouldn't bother him during the last half!"

It was plain that Arlington and Warne had decided that it was best for them to avoid making a scene, but Dick knew well enough that they were not the kind of fellows to forego a chance for revenge.

That night the talk of the academy was the football-game. It had become known that the athletic committee were responsible for the shifting about of the players in the first half of the game, and not a few of the students criticized this interference with Dick's part of the business. He had demonstrated beyond a doubt in the last half of the game that he knew the positions to which the men were adapted and that he could run the team successfully if not interfered with.

In the evening Dick and Brad went into town. As they approached the post-office, Dick suddenly grasped his companion's arm and drew him into a doorway.

"What is it?" asked the Texan.

"Look across the street."

"Where?"

"See those two fellows over there?"

"Yes. Why, one of them is—it's Arlington!"

"Sure."

"And the other is——"

"Fred Kennedy!"

"Right!" exclaimed Brad triumphantly. "That is Kennedy! I knew I wasn't mistaken! Come, Dick, let's go over there and tackle them! You can do up Kennedy. I'll take care of Arlington while you even the score with the fellow who blinded you in Uniontown."

But Dick held Brad back.

"Don't be too hasty," he warned. "What are they doing together? I'd like to understand that."

"It is right queer."

"I should say so! Chester Arlington is a member of the Fardale Academy athletic committee, and is associating with this Kennedy, who is a crooked gambler. Without doubt, Kennedy came here to-day to bet money on the football-game, and you may be sure he did not bet on Fardale."

"Arlington is a traitor!" growled Buckhart. "Pard, you can throw him down hard, and it's up to you to throw!"

"I want to find out just what is doing between these two."

"They'll get away!"

"No! I'm going to follow them."

"I'm with you."

But Dick knew he could shadow the two far better without the aid of Buckhart, so he insisted that Brad stay back and watch him from a distance.

From a main part of the town Dick shadowed Arlington and Kennedy over

that portion known as The Harbor. Buckhart saw him take that direction and then lost sight of him. But Brad was satisfied that Arlington and Kennedy had made for The Harbor, and he followed cautiously.

Dick was peering in at the window of one of the wretched saloons of that quarter, when he heard some one approaching. He stepped back, hugging close to the corner of the house, and Brad would have passed.

"Here, you!" whispered Dick. "Hold up, old man. Come here."

Brad stopped in surprise.

"Is that you, pard?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Sure thing. Come here where you'll not be seen if any one comes along."

Brad joined him.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"I've followed those fellows here," said Dick. "They are inside."

"What are they doing?"

"That is what I can't make out."

"And why did they come here?"

"To get away where there would be little chance that they would be seen together by any one they did not wish to see them, I fancy."

"But the whole thing is a mystery to me, pard," confessed Buckhart.

Dick touched his arm, and cautioned him to keep still. Somebody was approaching. The street ran close by the corner of the house, and, from their place of concealment, they saw a person passing.

"Great Scott!" whispered Dick, who seemed to have eyes like an owl. "Did you recognize him, Brad?"

"Too dark. Did you?"

"Well, if it wasn't Joe Savage, I'm greatly mistaken!"

"Joe Savage?"

"Yes."

"Here?"

"That's what."

"Well, this thing is growing thick. Where is he going?"

Dick peered round the corner and watched the dark figure pass down the street and vanish in the gloom.

"I may have been mistaken," he admitted; "but I know he had a walk like Joe Savage, was just about the build of Savage, and looked to me in every way like Savage."

Then he slipped to the window and again peered into the saloon. He was just in time to see a man with a lamp in his hand conduct Arlington and Kennedy into a back room. After a few moments the man came out and closed the door behind him.

"If there is a window to that room, we must find it," muttered Dick.

There was a window, and they found it. Further, there was a broken pane of glass in the window. Inside the window some shutters had been closed, but in one of the shutters was a broken strip, and through this crack Dick peered and saw Kennedy and Arlington seated with a table between them.

Buckhart stood on guard while Dick watched those within the little back room of the old saloon. The broken pane enabled Dick to hear the conversation of the fine pair inside.

"It was hard luck!" said Arlington.

"Hard luck?" exclaimed Kennedy. "Is that what you call it? Hang it! you told me it was certain Uniontown would win!"

"That's right!"

"But Fardale pulled out and won the game. I dropped three hundred dollars."

"And I dropped every blooming cent I have made playing cards in a week, besides what money my mother left me when she went away. I have been skinning a sucker, and all I have left to show for it is his I O U's."

"You said you had fixed it so it was a sure thing."

"And so I did. Didn't Uniontown have a walkover in the first half?"

"Look here, Mr. Arlington, if you had not given me the cold cash to bet on our team, I'd be dead certain you threw me down. Where did you go when the first half was over? You vanished, and you were not seen again by me. Then Merriwell switched the team round and walked into us."

It was plain Arlington did not care to reveal how he and Warne had been trapped by Dick. He hesitated a little, and then told an improbable story about being called away by one of the professors.

"You see, I've been in a little trouble here," he said, "and they have been investigating the affair. I was wanted just about then to answer some questions, and I had to go."

"Fishy!" exclaimed Kennedy suspiciously. "It was a queer time for the faculty to be carrying on an investigation."

"Oh, they do queer things around that old academy. I tried to get away and hurry back, but they wouldn't let me. I thought the game was Uniontown's, anyhow, and so I didn't worry about it."

Brad Buckhart could hear some of this, and now he was grinding his strong teeth together.

"A fine chap to have on the athletic committee!" he hissed. "He ought to be lynched!"

"There is just one thing led me into this deal," Chester explained to his companion. "That is my hatred for Dick Merriwell. If he were not captain of our team, you'd never catch me betting against it. If he were off the team, I'd work for it as

hard as I could. But I am going to down him if it takes a leg! I'll stop at nothing to do it! I have the athletic committee just where I want them. Some of them have played right into my hands, and they don't dare do anything but what I tell them to do. In short, I am the whole committee."

"Very interesting information," commented Dick, in a low whisper.

Arlington was smoking a cigarette. Kennedy had lighted a cigar. Both had ordered drinks, but had not touched the stuff brought them.

"If I hadn't been called away," Chester went on, "the result of the game would have been different. Merriwell could not have changed the team round again had I remained on the field."

At this moment, as Dick peered through the broken shutter, the door of the room was thrown open and Joe Savage appeared in the doorway. Savage was pale and excited.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "I passed this place once. Didn't think this was the place you meant when you made the appointment."

He came in and closed the door.

"I was right!" thought Dick. "It was Savage I saw."

Neither Arlington nor Kennedy offered to get up. Chester motioned toward a broken chair.

"Sit down," he said:

"I don't care to stop here," said Savage. "I don't like the looks of the place."

"You're fussy, my friend," said Kennedy, with a short laugh.

"What have you got to say about it?" exclaimed Joe, frowning at Kennedy. "I have no business with you. If Mr. Arlington will kindly hand over those I O U's, as he agreed, I will get out of here and bother you no more."

Chester languidly lighted a fresh cigarette.

"Sorry, Savage," he drawled, "but I didn't bring them with me."

"You didn't?"

"No."

"You agreed to—you promised! Confound you, Arlington! are you tricking me? You won my money from me, and I gave you those papers when you continued to stick me. You knew I had sworn off gambling when you coaxed me into it. You knew my father had said he'd disown me if I played cards any more. And so, when you found your opportunity, you made me play into your hands. At the meeting you sent word that you would forward those I O U's to my father if I did not withdraw and do my best to give you my vote. If I did so, you would give them over to me. You have not kept your word to give them up. You promised to do so to-night if I would meet you here. Now, do you mean to keep your promise?"

"No," answered Chester coldly.

The next moment Savage had Arlington by the throat and was choking him.

Kennedy sprang up, caught the bottle and struck Savage over the head, dropping him to the floor. Then Dick Merriwell smashed the window, burst the shutters open, and went into that room. But the rascals did not wait for him. With the first crash of breaking glass, they leaped toward the door, through which they disappeared.

Dick lifted Savage, whose head was cut and bleeding. Buckhart followed Dick into the room by the window, and was on hand when the proprietor of the saloon came hurrying in.

"What's happened here?" asked the man who ran the place.

"Where are those fellows who were here?" demanded Dick, who was tying a handkerchief about Savage's bleeding head.

"They dusted out. But who are you, and where did you come from? My window is broken, and——"

"I'll pay for the window," said Dick. "The entire damage isn't more than two dollars. Here is five."

The man took the five-dollar bill Dick extended.

"Can you stand, Savage?" asked young Merriwell.

"I—I think I can," said Joe. "But that rap took the nerve out of me. I'm limp as a rag. They ran! Arlington got away! I—I didn't get what I came for."

"But you'll get them, all right," said Dick grimly, "Don't worry about that."

"You bet!" growled Buckhart.

"We must get you to a doctor who can sew up your scalp where it was cut by that bottle. You're bleeding pretty freely, and that must be stopped. Take hold, Buckhart. We'll get him out of this quarter if we have to carry him."

Between them they got Joe out of the saloon and started for the respectable portion of the village.

"We didn't get a crack at those galoots!" said Brad regretfully. "I opined we'd have a lively time when you smashed the window and went jumping in there."

Savage grew stronger after getting out into the open air.

"That devil!" he muttered. "Dick, I know you must think me a pretty cheap fellow. I can't help it. I believe I am pretty cheap. But Arlington is slick. He got me into a bad scrape. I had an idea no one could beat me playing poker, but he's the slickest thing in the business, and he skinned me clean to my eye-teeth. He had my I O U's, and he was going to use them against me. That's how he forced me to withdraw and permit him to get on the committee. He has no right there!"

"Don't worry about that," said Dick. "He'll not stay on that committee. He will resign Monday, and you'll get your I O U's on the same day."

CHAPTER XVII—DICK CONQUERS HIS ENEMY

Dick rapped sharply on the door of Chester Arlington's room. There was a stir within, a pause, and then——

"Come in," called a voice.

Dick entered.

Chester had risen and was standing at attention. When he saw Dick he looked surprised and disgusted.

"I thought it an inspector," he growled sullenly, a frown coming to his haughty face, then he flung himself loungingly upon a comfortable chair, drew forth a cigarette-case, took out a paper-covered cigarette, and rolled it between his fingers.

There was smoke in the room.

"If I were an inspector," thought Dick, who had closed the door behind him, "I see where you would get pulled over the coals."

"What in thunder do you want here?" asked Arlington sneeringly, as he struck a match and lighted his cigarette.

He was not a little surprised by Dick's boldness in entering that room, and yet he suspected what had brought his unwelcome visitor.

"I have a little business to transact with you, Arlington," said Merriwell, with a quiet, determined manner that irritated Chester still further.

"Well, I don't care to have dealings of any sort with you," declared Arlington, "and I will inform you at once that you are not wanted here. This is my room, and you had better get out."

Dick did not show any inclination to mind this indirect command.

"You may be sure, Arlington," he returned, "that I am not dealing with you from choice. Circumstances have made it necessary."

"Well, I refuse to have anything at all to do with you, so get out!"

Instead of obeying, Dick came a little nearer.

"You'll not refuse," he asserted.

"Oh, yes, I will!"

"Oh, no, you won't!"

"I'd like to know why not?"

"Because you dare not."

"Dare not?"

"Exactly. If you refuse, you will be called before the faculty to-morrow morning to answer to several grave charges."

It seemed that Chester turned a trifle pale, but he snapped his fingers, stained yellow by cigarettes.

"A threat!" he exclaimed. "But I do not mind your threats, fellow!"

"You will mind this one, for it will be mighty unhealthy for you."

"You're a bully!" cried Arlington, springing up. "But you can't bully me in my own room! There's the door!"

He pointed with his finger, but Dick did not look; instead, he kept his dark eyes fixed on those of his enemy, and there was something in that steady look that held Chester in check.

"When I am through," he said, in the same manner of quiet assurance, "I shall lose no time in getting out by that door."

"I won't disgrace myself by getting into a row with you," sneered the other.

"You have disgraced yourself enough already. I advise you to go slow."

"I want no advice from you!"

"In your heart you know well enough one reason why I am here."

"Really, I haven't the least idea," said Arlington, as he again sat down, a bored expression driving the look of anger from his face.

Dick, however, knew Chester was not bored, knew he was shamming, knew he was nervous and apprehensive.

"It will not take me long to tell you why I am here. For one thing, I want you to resign immediately from the athletic committee."

Chester laughed,

"You—you want me to! Well, what you want is nothing to me. What you want and what I'll do are two entirely different things."

"You will resign," declared Dick, with positive assurance.

"Not much!"

"You will resign."

"Why? Because you order it? Because you want to run the football-team, the committee, and everything connected with Fardale athletics? Well, you'll find that you can't have everything your own way!"

"If you do not resign," said Dick, "I shall immediately take steps to compel you to do so."

"You compel me?"

"I shall."

"Why, you crazy idiot! You conceited duffer! You swell-headed——"

"That will do!" came sternly from Dick's lips. "I know you would like to provoke me into attacking you here, in order that you might claim I came to your room and assaulted you. I shall not touch you in this room, but if you continue your insulting epithets I shall call you to account elsewhere the first opportunity that presents."

"Bully! But you can't frighten me. My father is D. Roscoe Arlington, and——"

"That is something you have told everybody in this school a dozen times, or more; but I should fancy you ought to see by this time that it fails to make an impression."

Dick spoke like one who felt himself entire master of the situation, and that was one thing that infuriated Arlington, although he could not help being impressed by it. It was this air of perfect assurance of his position that marked Dick as one different from most lads and gave him influence and power to a degree. He was also magnetic, and those who learned to admire him as a friend grew soon to swear by him in everything and believe he could not make a mistake.

"I am not going to be dictated to by you! Put that in your pipe and smoke it! You can't order me about. I was elected to the committee to fill the place made vacant by the resignation of Warwick, and on that committee I'll stay."

"You will not be on that committee to-morrow night. I give you your choice, you may resign or be fired off. But you had better resign, for you may be fired out of the school if you are fired off the committee."

"Bah!"

"The charges that will be preferred against you on the committee are certain to leak out, and a call before the faculty must follow."

"What are you talking about, anyhow? What charges will be preferred?"

"You will be accused of having dealings with Fred Kennedy, a gambler, of giving him money to bet against Fardale, and of being a gambler yourself. Thus you, one of the athletic committee, therefore deeply interested in the success of the football-team, are plainly a traitor working against your own school."

"That's fine!" sneered Chester. "It's easy to make such a charge, but how are you going to prove it?"

"I have proof enough."

"What proof?"

"You were heard in Murphy's saloon at The Harbor dealing with Kennedy."

"By whom?"

"Myself."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Chester. "And do you think that proof enough? I think

my word is as good as yours."

"I was not the only one there. Brad Buckhart was with me outside the window, which was broken, and he heard your talk."

"Anybody knows he would lie for you."

"Joe Savage saw you in that room, where he went to have some dealings with you. He was attacked, struck with a bottle, and seriously injured. He will appear against you."

"He'd better not!" grated Arlington fiercely. "If he does, he'll go out of Fardale, too!"

"He'll appear, though. You failed to keep your promise to him, and so——"

"What promise?"

"Your promise to give up his I O U's, won from him at the poker-table."

"So that's his story, eh? Ha, ha! Do you fancy he'll be fool enough to get up before the committee and tell that he gambled with me? Why, he'd be in trouble at once! Gambling is not allowed here. And he doesn't want his mother to know that he played for money."

"You're right about that, but you have driven him to the limit. The worm has turned. Arlington, I am holding him in check now. But for me he would have gone to Professor Gunn with the whole story."

"I don't believe it!"

"Believe it or not, as you like."

"Why should you hold him in check—you? You are my enemy, and I am yours. You'd not do such a thing for me."

"No."

"Then——"

"For your sister."

"My sister! Confound you! how dare you speak of her! She is nothing to you!"

"She is a splendid girl, and it is a shame she has such a scoundrel for a brother."

Chester leaped up, seizing a paper-weight from the table, and swung it backward to hurl it at Dick.

"You won't throw it," said Merriwell, with the utmost coolness, making no move to dodge or to protect himself, but looking his enemy straight in the eyes.

Chester was quivering with excitement, and his lips were drawn back from his handsome white teeth.

"Blazes take you, Merriwell!" panted Chester. "Some time I'll kill you!"

"Perhaps you may try it. It would be like you. Put down that paper-weight."

Dick was watching his enemy so closely that he did not see the slight movement of some curtains which hid an alcove, did not see them slightly parted, and

did not observe a pair of beady black eyes that peered out at him. Some one besides Arlington and Merriwell was in that room and had been there all the time.

Chester hesitated, but Dick's dark eyes seemed to have some magnetic power over him, for he suddenly lowered his hand and tossed the paper-weight with a thud upon the table.

"Better not mention my sister further," he said huskily, shrugging his shoulders. "You touch me on a sore spot. I can't bear to think of her having anything at all to do with you—even speaking to you."

"You asked me a question, and I answered it truthfully. You are her brother, and she worries over you. It would hurt her to have you expelled from Fardale."

"Expelled?"

"That is just what will happen to you if I cease to hold Joe Savage in check. That is what is almost certain to happen to you if I go before the athletic committee and tell what I know."

"Hang you! You are bound to get me off that committee. You tried to keep me from getting on it."

"I should have done so, but I did not. That was where I made a mistake. But I had promised your mother not to interfere with your ambitions, and I——"

"Bah! What did you care about such a promise to my mother?"

"My friends urged me to work against you and keep you from getting on the committee. I know you are a fellow who does not hesitate to break a promise, and so you cannot understand why I should desire to keep the promise I foolishly gave your mother. I refused to interfere in any way. Seeing that, many of the fellows who would have voted against you had I used my influence declined to vote at all. Some even voted for you, thinking it might be well to have a plebe on the committee. I was one who counted the votes. I could have prevented you from winning then without making a move. I did not suppose you would find a way to sway the whole committee if you got on, and I thought it might deepen your interest in the welfare of the team if you got on. I cannot understand a fellow who will let his personal feelings lead him into working for or even desiring the defeat of his school team in order to humiliate an enemy."

"Oh, you're such a wonderfully upright and honest fellow!" sneered Arlington. "You make me sick!"

"I shall not waste further words with you. I want your promise before I leave this room to resign from the committee, or I shall expose you."

Arlington felt that he was cornered, but he hated to give in to the lad he detested.

"All right!" he finally exclaimed. "I'll resign."

"Then that point is settled."

"But don't think for a minute that you are done with me! I am still your

enemy, and you will find Chester Arlington relentless! I have power, too. The Arlingtons refuse to be beaten, and you can't beat me."

"That's all right. If you resign, you'll be wise. But I have one thing more to demand."

Chester gasped.

"Something else? Confound you! that's too much! You have driven me just as fast as you can!"

"I want the I O U's you hold against Savage," said Dick, in the same self-possessed, confident manner.

"You want them? Ha, ha!"

"Yes; you will give them to me."

"If I do——"

"Don't be too hasty. What do you expect to do with them?"

"I won them. He owes me almost fifty dollars."

"Which he cannot pay."

"That's not my fault. He'll have to pay, or——"

"You wish revenge against Savage. It won't work. I am satisfied that you won from him crookedly."

"He thinks he's pretty slick with cards," said Chester; "but he got bitten, that's all."

Dick knew Joe Savage had not been above winning money in questionable ways at one time, but Savage had reformed, and he seemed sincere, so that Merriwell was satisfied that he had been led into gambling again, not that he had chosen it of his own inclination.

Arlington's words were a practical confession that he had "skinned" Savage, and Dick had no further hesitation about carrying out his original plan.

"You agreed to give up those I O U's if Savage would withdraw as a candidate for the athletic committee and ask that all votes cast for him be thrown for you on the next balloting."

"Well?" said Chester defiantly, "what of it?"

"You failed to keep your agreement with him."

"Well, you're taking a lot of interest in this fellow who went against what he knew was your desire in that meeting! What are you after? Are you working to get him in your power? That's it! You have no right to demand those I O U's, and I shall not give them up to you."

"Then you will be summoned before the faculty to-morrow."

Arlington was desperate. It was difficult for him to control the rage he felt.

"So you'll ruin Savage here just to get a blow at me!" he cried harshly. "That shows how much of a friend you are to him!"

"I am doing this with the full knowledge and consent of Joe Savage."

"Then he's a fool!"

"Call him that to his face when he recovers from the treacherous blow he received."

"Oh, I'd willingly do it! I have no fear of him—nor of you!"

But Chester was beginning to fear Merriwell, as well as hate him. Why was it Dick always accomplished anything he set about doing?

Dick turned toward the door.

"If you choose to sacrifice yourself for those worthless bits of paper," he said, "go ahead. I have told you what I shall do, and you know I never fail to keep my word."

He was going, and Arlington wavered. It was the bitterness of gall to surrender, but he felt that it was better than the disgrace of expulsion.

"Hold on!" he said. "I don't want the old papers, anyhow! Here!" He took some slips from his pocket. "Here they are. Take them. I meant to give them to Savage."

Dick stepped back quietly, with no expression of satisfaction or triumph, and took the slips from Chester's hand. Quietly he ran them over, glancing at each one. Arlington longed intensely to strike him, but experience had taught him that he had better not do so.

"These are right," nodded Dick, coolly putting the slips into his pocket.

Again he turned and walked toward the door. Just as he put out his hand to open the door, something whizzed past his head. Thud!—it struck the door and stuck there, quivering. It was a knife!

CHAPTER XVIII—BUNOL HOLDS HIS GRIP

Dick turned like a flash. He saw a slender, dark-faced youth, who had stepped from behind the curtains and thrown the knife. He also saw that Chester Arlington had made a spring and clutched the arm of this youth, thus causing the knife to fly a trifle wild.

That quick move by Arlington had saved Dick. This Merriwell instantly understood.

"You crazy fellow!" Chester panted, giving Bunol a backward fling. "Do you want to ruin us both? What are you trying to do?"

"I keel him!" snarled the Spanish youth, his dark eyes glaring murderously. "I keel him!"

"That would ruin us! You ought to know that!"

Then Arlington turned to Dick.

"You can thank me," he said, "that you did not get that knife between your shoulders."

"That's a nice, murderous whelp you have there!" said Dick, without a tremor in his voice. "I think he's altogether too devilish for this school, and I'll have to report this piece of business. A fellow who throws a knife at another fellow's back will be fired out of Fardale in a hurry."

"Hold on, Merriwell!" exclaimed Arlington. "Don't forget that I saved you!"

"For your own sake," returned Dick instantly.

"For my own sake?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because you know the trouble you would get into. Because you were afraid of that. Not from any love of me."

"Did you help me out of the fire from love of me?"

"No."

Arlington forced a laugh.

"I knew you did not. Then we are quits. The score is evened up."

"But that does not let your fine friend Bunol out. He is a treacherous snake, and——"

"Yah!" snarled the Spanish boy, starting to advance toward Dick. "I make you take it back!"

Again Arlington grasped him.

"Keep still!" he commanded. "You are no match for him, so keep away."

"He have you in bad feex," said Bunol. "I feex him! You wait! You see!"

The eyes of the young Spaniard gleamed with a light that would have made a nervous fellow uneasy.

Dick jerked the knife from the door, turned about with it in his hand, and strode back at Miguel Bunol.

The young Spaniard cried out in excitement, thinking Merriwell meant to attack and stab him. He made a spring for a corner, where stood a pair of Indian clubs, and one of these he picked up as a weapon. He chattered something in Spanish as he faced about again, but Dick had paused by the table, and was talking to Chester.

"It will be a good thing for you, Arlington," Merriwell was saying, "if this

snake in the grass has to leave Fardale. If he remains, he will some day get you into a bad scrape, mark what I say."

Chester flung back his head with a haughty pose.

"You have had things your own way since coming to this room, Merriwell," he said. "But you cannot deny that I saved your life, for that knife would have struck you fairly had I not grasped Miguel's arm. If you report this matter, it will bring about an investigation, which may mean no end of trouble for me, resulting in my expulsion, as well as Bunol's. Of course, I have no way of preventing you from doing as you like, but I advise you to think it over before you carry it too far. And now, before there is further trouble, get out. Leave that knife here on the table."

"No; I'll take the knife as a trophy."

"The knife belongs to me!" cried Bunol.

"No; it belongs to me," declared Dick, as he slipped it into his pocket. "As parting advice to you, Arlington, take care that your snaky friend does not carry a knife, unless you wish him to land you in prison by murdering somebody when you are not around."

Dick walked out, without once looking back. His manner was perfectly fearless.

When the door closed behind Merriwell, Bunol uttered a little exclamation of disappointment, dropping the Indian club to the floor. He sat down heavily on a chair.

"You fool!" said Chester scornfully. "Do you want to get us both hanged? If that knife had struck him——"

"He would be dead now!"

"And we would be in a fine scrape! Merriwell is right; you must stop carrying a knife."

"I—I stop? I—I no carry knife?"

"Well, if you do, I'll have to cut clear of you."

Bunol seemed thunderstruck.

"You—you do that? You cut clear of me? Why, you bring me here! You pay my way here! You say I must come to school at Fardale."

"Because I found you handy before we came here. But now you are becoming a trouble to me. I am beginning to think I'd be better off without you."

The young Spaniard showed still further amazement.

"You mean I had better go 'way?" he asked.

"I think you had," answered Chester, plainly making an effort to summon the courage to say so. "I have been thinking about it for some time. You are not much interested in this school, and there is no particular reason why you should stay here."

"And you I think is great friend to me!" returned Bunol wonderingly.

"Well, I have been a friend to you, haven't I?"

"You seem so."

"Seem so! Why, you have lived off me for more than a year! It was a snap for you."

"But now," said Miguel, "the snap he end, eh? Now you shake me off, eh? Now you say go, I go, eh? You have done with me? What for?"

"Because you are so hot-headed that you will get me into trouble here."

"Bah! No! Because you 'fraid Dick Merriwell! That it! I know! First you come here you think you walk over him. Ha! You try it. Ha! You find it no work. Then you mean to beat him some way. You try it. It no work. Ha! You find he very much smart. He no 'fraid anything. When you try, try, try, you begin to get 'fraid of him an' you——"

"That's a lie, Bunol!" exclaimed Chester harshly. "I am not afraid of anything. But I know now that Merriwell cannot be defeated by ordinary means. I acknowledge it. I remain his enemy, just the same. I shall defeat him in the end. I shall triumph. But I must begin differently. I must work in more subtle ways. Thus far, for the most part, I have tried to down him by main force. Now I have decided that I must use my brain—I must resort to strategy. From this day my fight against him shall be strategical. He may not even think me his enemy. He may fancy me defeated. He may even imagine me something of a friend. All the while I shall be working silently against him. When the time comes for me to strike the crushing blow I shall strike it. But not until I have triumphed shall I let him know that it was my hand that pulled him down. This is something new for an Arlington. We meet our enemies openly and defeat them. But I have found this enemy too strongly intrenched.

"As I have decided on such a course, I have also concluded that I shall be better off without you here. Therefore, Bunol, I think you had better make arrangements to leave Fardale. I will give you a hundred dollars, and you may go where you choose."

The Spaniard walked excitedly up and down the floor. Of a sudden he stopped beyond the table, across which he glared at Chester, who had lighted a fresh cigarette.

"I shall not go!" he exclaimed.

"So?" said Chester, lifting his eyebrows. "You will remain here?"

"I remain."

"Indeed! How will you get along?"

"Get 'long? Why, jest same."

"You may have some trouble to pay your way."

"But you——"

Arlington snapped his yellow fingers.

"It's all off," he declared. "I'm done."

"What? You mean you no help me some more?"

"You guessed it the first time."

Arlington pretended the utmost coolness, whether he felt it or not. He inhaled a great whiff of smoke and breathed it out as he spoke. When he had finished he stifled a yawn with his hand.

Bunol was dazed, for this had come upon him suddenly and unexpectedly, and he was unprepared. He had not dreamed Arlington would think of throwing him over.

"So that is it?" he said, after a time. "You think you throw me over! You think you have done with me! Ha! I got a thing to say 'bout that!"

"You had better not be foolish, Bunol—better not make me any trouble. You're too much of a load for me to carry."

"Too much load?"

"That's what I said. It was all right before I bucked up against Merriwell, but fighting him has cost me a pretty penny, and I'm in a bad hole. I dropped my last dollar and all I could rake on those Uniontown chumps. Thought they were dead sure to win, and gave the money to Kennedy to bet. I'm strapped, Bunol."

"But you get more easy."

"Not so easy. I've been working the old lady pretty hard of late, and she's about ready to make a kick. I've even got money off sis."

"You offer me one hundred dollars to go 'way."

Chester glanced at his hand, on which sparkled a handsome diamond.

"I'll have to stick this stone up for the sum," he said. "You see just where I'm at, Miguel. I'm bumping on the rocks. You can't blame me. If I had not been beaten at every turn by Merriwell I'd be 'way ahead now."

"I keel him! You stop me! I know he make it trouble for you—for me."

"Killing doesn't go, Miguel. You're too hot-headed for this place. Come, old man, there is no reason why we should fuss about this matter. The time has come for us to split, and that is all there is to do."

But Miguel Bunol knew which side his bread was buttered on, and he did not fancy giving up a good thing like Arlington.

"I go," he said.

"Good!" nodded Chester.

"For one thousan' dollars," added Miguel.

Chester had elevated his feet to the top of the table. Now he let them drop to the floor with a thud, flung the cigarette aside, and sat up.

"You go——" he began.

Then he paused, with his lips curling, finally adding:

"——to the devil!"

"I stay right here," said the Spaniard, with unconscious wit.

"As you choose," said Chester; "but you'll stay on your own account, and not one dollar more will you ever get from me."

Suddenly Bunol became cool.

"That is so, eh?" he asked.

"It is."

"Ha! You think it. You change your mind. I make you change your mind."

"You—you make me?" The idea that Bunol could make him do anything was amusing to Arlington.

"I make you," reiterated the Spaniard.

"That's a joke! Why, you poor fool, how will you go about it? What way have you to make me do anything?"

"Plenty way. You say 'no'? Ha! How you like it if I tell few thing 'bout you?"

"Tell—tell what?"

"How you do some thing since you come here. Ha! How you do your best to beat Deek Merriwell. How you try to have football-team beat, so Deek Merriwell he is beat. How you want him scratch with the poison ring, so his arm it swell, and so he can play no more at the football. Oh, I can tell!"

"But you'll get yourself into a worse scrape than I, for you have been the one to do most of the work against Merriwell. I shall swear that you lie."

"I tell your seester! I tell your mother!"

"They'll not believe you. My word will stand better than yours. You'll simply get yourself into trouble."

"I prove some thing."

"You can't; I've taken care of that. I have thought all along that the time would come when we would have to split. Of course, I had no intention of supporting you the rest of your natural life."

Arlington was defying his former companion and tool, but no one knew better than he how dangerous Miguel Bunol was, and he was keenly on the alert for anything.

"I never be thrown over like this!" asserted the Spaniard. "I ruin you."

"You will ruin yourself, that is all."

"You say that. Ha! How we come to be friends in first place? I tell that! I will!"

"You wouldn't dare!" exclaimed Chester, turning pale.

"You think that? You wait—you see! I tell how you have boy you hate, how you pay me to push him off bridge, how he sink, he drown! Ha!"

"But I didn't mean for him to drown!" explained Chester.

"He drown," said Bunol grimly.

"I meant to give him a ducking and a scare."

"He drown!" again came from the lips of the Spaniard.

"I did everything I could to save him. I stripped off and plunged in. I tried to pull him out."

"All the same, he drown. Then you say nothing. You no tell how it happen. You say think he fell in. You try to get him out. Somebody say you hero. Miguel Bunol say nothing."

"It wasn't best that you did! You didn't fancy going to prison for murder in the second degree. That's what would have happened to you."

"We get great friend. Now you want me no more, you throw me down. Go 'head! I throw you down! I tell all!"

"But it will put you in just as bad a hole."

"What do I care? I get even with you! Which hurt most—I go to jail, or you go to jail? You son of great man. All my relation dead 'cept mother. No can tell where she is now."

Arlington rose, thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets, and began to pace up and down.

Bunol watched him with those beady eyes, and an expression of triumph came to his face. He knew that he had conquered, and he was right. At last, Chester turned, came back to the table, and said:

"We can't afford to quarrel now, I think I was too hasty. We'll stick together. I may need you some more."

"I stick to you all right," said the Spaniard, with keenest satisfaction. "Don't you be 'fraid."

CHAPTER XIX—A CRY IN THE NIGHT

The resignation of Chester Arlington from the athletic committee created no end of astonishment. He was overwhelmed with questions, but very little could be learned from him, as he refused to answer.

"I made up my mind to do it," he said, "and I did it, that's all. I'm not going

to talk about it, so don't worry me."

It must be confessed that this action on his part lost him many supporters. The plebes were indignant, as they lost a representative on the committee, George Hardy, a first class man, being chosen to fill the vacancy.

Perhaps Mark Crauthers was the most disgusted fellow in Fardale. He sought Arlington and expressed himself in a flow of violent language, without giving Chester an opportunity to say a word. When he paused, Arlington sneeringly asked:

"Are you through?"

"Well, I haven't said half I could!" snarled Crauthers, showing his dark teeth. "Why, we had things right in our own hands! With you on that committee, the Black Wolves could have run things as they chose. You lost the greatest opportunity you ever had to hurt Merriwell—the greatest you will ever have."

"Perhaps I'm tired of this foolishness," said Chester.

"What foolishness?"

"Trying to injure Merriwell."

"What?" gasped Crauthers. "You? Why, he has insulted you in a dozen ways, and you are the last man to——"

"Oh, I've forced it on him, and you know that Merriwell is not such a bad fellow after all."

Crauthers seemed to be choking.

"Well," he growled, "I'm blowed if I didn't think all along that there was something of the squealer about you! You blowed too much about your father being the great D. Roscoe Arlington, and——"

"That will do for you!" said Chester, with a pleasant smile. "It is just about the limit."

"The limit! Why, you haven't backbone enough to——"

"If you think so," said Arlington, "just walk down behind the cedars with me."

"What would you do?"

"I'll agree to give you a handsome thrashing."

"You can't do it! Why, I can wallop any squealer that ever——"

"You're a big stiff!" declared Chester. "You do not dare walk down behind the cedars."

Immediately Crauthers started for the cedars, a little grove that stood within sight of the academy. Behind this grove, hidden from view of any one in or about the academy, many a fight had taken place. It was a favorite place for cadets to settle their differences when they had not time to get farther away.

"Come on—if you dare!" growled Crauthers.

"I'll be right along," promised Chester.

Five minutes later the two, who had seemed on friendly terms up to that day, met behind the cedars. Chester pulled off his coat and placed it on the ground, dropping his cap upon it. Then he sailed into Crauthers.

Three or four cadets had discovered that something was going to happen behind the cedars, and they were on hand to witness the encounter.

Arlington had taken boxing-lessons, and he was really skilful. True, he had found his skill outmatched by that of Dick Merriwell in a personal encounter, but now it did not take him long to demonstrate that he was Crauthers' superior, and in less than ten minutes he had the fellow whipped to a finish.

"If any of your friends make the kind of talk you did to me," he politely said, "I'll cheerfully apply the same treatment."

Crauthers, with his face bruised and one eye rapidly closing, made no reply, but he ground his dark teeth in impotent rage.

Arlington, however, had demonstrated that he would fight, and from that time there was little outspoken criticism of his change in bearing toward Dick Merriwell.

Brad Buckhart was heartily disgusted when he heard of the new position Arlington had taken.

"Wouldn't that freeze your feet!" he exclaimed, as he finished telling Dick about it. "He'll be trying to get chummy with you next. He will, I know!"

Dick smiled a bit, but said nothing.

"Say, pard," came anxiously from the Texan, "I hope you won't let that onery coyote come crawling round you any whatever. Not even for his sister's sake. She's all right, but you can't trust Chet Arlington."

"Don't worry," was all Dick said.

That afternoon Arlington was on hand to watch the practise of the football-team.

Unhampered by the orders of the committee, Dick had full charge of the men on the field, and he put them through their paces in a way that demonstrated what he could do with them if given full sway. The boys seemed to show up unusually well and take hold of the work with new interest.

Whenever a play was carried out with unusual adroitness Chester nodded and smiled.

"Great!" he said. "The team is in the finest possible shape, and Merriwell must be given credit for it all. I have doubted his ability in the past, but I acknowledge my mistake."

"He makes me sick!" muttered Fred Stark, walking away.

Stark found Mark Crauthers talking to Sam Hogan over near the grand stand. Crauthers had been doctoring his eye, but he looked as if he had been "up against the real thing."

"Look here," said Fred, as he joined the others, "there's Arlington over yonder clapping and cheering for Merriwell. I wanted to hit him, but——"

"That's it!" exclaimed Crauthers. "I know just how you felt. I did hit him! And he hit me! I hadn't an idea a fellow who had been whipped by Merriwell could fight the way he can."

"He's a thorough cad!" declared Stark. "I see through his little game. He's beaten by Merriwell, and he has given up. Now he hopes to get on by turning round and howling for that fellow—hopes to get taken into Merriwell's set, perhaps."

Hogan glanced round. Seeing there was no one near enough to hear what they were saying, he spoke in a low tone:

"The Wolves are broken up. He's never been any use. We three are the only ones left."

"And we may as well quit," said Crauthers regretfully. "If he gets in with Merriwell, he'll give the whole thing away."

"One last meeting," urged Stark.

"When?"

"To-night."

They looked at one another, nodded, and Hogan said:

"I'll be on hand. The Den, I suppose?"

"Yes. It's not likely we'll ever meet there again after to-night. It wouldn't be safe. If Arlington blowed on us——"

"But it will take him some time to get in with Merriwell. Dick Merriwell is not going to take up with that fellow at once. Arlington will have to get right down and crawl before Merriwell forgives him."

"I'm not so sure," said Stark. "There is a reason why Merriwell may be glad to take up with Arlington."

"You mean——"

"Arlington's sister, of course. She's smashed on Merriwell, and he is some smitten on her. That will make all the difference in the world. I'll not be surprised to see Merriwell and Arlington chummy within a week or so."

"It's disgusting!" growled Crauthers. "Do you know, I have heard that these Merriwells always turn their enemies into friends."

"I know one who will never become a friend to Dick Merriwell," declared Stark.

Hogan said nothing, but down in his heart there was a guilty feeling, for in the past Dick Merriwell had befriended him, and he had once thought that never again could he lift a hand against Dick.

But Hogan was a coarse fellow, and he had found it impossible to get in with Dick's friends. Dick treated him well enough, but Dick's friends would have

none of him. This had turned Hogan's wavering soul to bitterness again.

These fellows were satisfied that it was only a matter of time when Merriwell and Arlington would become firm friends. That was because they had not sounded the depths of Arlington's nature, had not realized that his hatred was of the sort that nearly always lived while life lasted.

Arlington had taken a fresh hand and was playing his cards in a new way. And he had resolved not to trust his most intimate friend. He, also, had learned that Dick Merriwell had a most wonderful faculty of turning enemies into friends without at all seeming to wish such a thing.

"The fellows here who pretend to be his enemies to-day may be fawning around him to-morrow," Arlington had decided. "I must be careful and trust no one. I will fool them all."

Be careful, Chester! There is such a thing as over-playing a part. You may fool many of them, but you will have to be very clever if you fool Dick Merriwell. You will find that those dark eyes of his have a way of reading secrets, of seeming to look straight through you, of piercing the dark corners of your heart and discovering your motives.

That night three dark figures stole away from the academy and made for a certain strip of woods in the heart of which lay a jungle of fallen trees that had been swept down by a tornado. Other trees had sprung up, bushes were thick, wild vines overran the mass in summer, fallen branches were strewn about; and still through this jungle a path had been made. It led to a secret retreat, where the Black Wolves had met many times to smoke and play cards and concoct plots. They knew the way well, and they followed it through the semi-darkness, for the moon was veiled by clouds.

At one place they were compelled to walk the trunk of a tree that had fallen against another tree. At an angle they walked upward along that often-trod tree trunk, coming to another fallen tree, lodged like the first against the one that remained standing. Down the second tree they made their way. Thus they passed over a thicket through which no path had been made, coming beyond it to what seemed almost like a tunnel, where the darkness was most intense. Creeping through this tunnel, they arrived in the Den, which had been formed originally by a number of trees that fell together, or were twisted together at their tops by the hurricane, in the form of an Indian wigwam. Inside, at the bottom the branches had been cleared away, boughs were spread on the ground, and in the center was a stone fireplace, about which the Wolves could sit in council.

Dry wood had been gathered and piled at hand, and some of this they soon arranged on the stones. Dry leaves served in the place of shavings. They were sheltered from the keen night air, but a fire would feel grateful enough, and one hastened to strike a match with numb fingers.

The leaves flamed up brightly, the wood caught fire with a pleasant crackling sound, and smoke began to roll upward. Then, of a sudden, one of the trio uttered a gasping exclamation of astonishment and startled terror, grasping the arm of another, and pointing toward one side of the Den. There, bolt upright and silent, sat a human figure, seeming to glare at them with glassy eyes.

So still was that figure that Crauthers, who had seen it first, thought it lifeless. It seemed like a person who had sought shelter there and had died, sitting straight up, with eyes wide open and staring. Was it a tramp?

No. As the fire rose still brighter they recognized the unbidden one. It was Miguel Bunol.

"The Spaniard!" exclaimed Stark.

"Spying on us!" burst from the lips of Crauthers, as he saw Bunol's eyes move and realized the fellow was very much alive.

"Sure as fate!" agreed Hogan. "He is Arlington's right-hand man, and he must be here as a spy."

Bunol laughed softly, coldly.

"Don't be fool all of you!" he said. "Bunol not a spy. Not much at all!"

"Confound you!" growled Crauthers, who seemed ready to leap on the Spanish lad. "What are you doing here, anyhow?"

"I belong to Wolves. I have right to be here."

"You were not invited. You were not told we meant to meet here. Then——"

"Bunol is no fool. He find out some things you do not tell him. But why you do not tell him? He is a Wolf, and he have right to know."

"Oh, go to Arlington, your master!" exclaimed Fred Stark.

"Chester Arlington no master of Miguel Bunol!" returned the young Spaniard, with heat. "Some time he find Bunol be his master. You wait, you see."

The young rascals looked at one another in doubt. Up to this time Bunol had seemed Arlington's devoted servant, and it did not seem possible he had turned against Chester so soon and so unexpectedly.

"Trick!" muttered Hogan suspiciously.

Stark thought so, too. He believed Arlington had somehow learned they were to meet there, and had sent Bunol to act as a spy and to learn what happened.

"Better soak him!" said Crauthers, who longed to get revenge on Chester in some manner, and thought it would be partial revenge to give his trusted servant a good thumping.

Bunol had not stirred. He was watching them closely with his keen eyes, and his equally keen ears missed not a word they spoke. He understood, too.

"Don't be fools!" he said, in the same soft voice. "You will not find it safe to soak Miguel Bunol."

"He carries a knife," said Stark.

Bunol's lips curled in a bitter smile. They did not know what had become of his knife. Dick Merriwell had it, but some day he would get it back.

"Look here, you!" he said, "Let me tell you! I have done with Chester Arlington as friend. You think a long time he is my master. Bah! All the time I am his master! All the time he pay my way here at school. I make him give to me the money. How I do it? No matter. I have way. Now he have spend so much he get in bad hole. He try to throw me over. Ha! I say no. He think he is my master, and he say I have to go. He give me one hundred dollars to get me to go. I laugh at him. I say one thousand. He cannot give that. I know he cannot give it. I stay. But I know he mean to get done with me soon as he can. I have done many thing for him, and it make me sore. Ha! See? No longer am I his friend. I make him give me money, but no longer will I do anything for him. I like to see him get it some in the neck. Ha!"

Again the boys looked at each other, this time wondering if Bunol spoke the truth.

"What kind of a game is this?" muttered Stark.

But Bunol protested that it was no game at all, and he swore by all things good and bad that he spoke the truth. He began to convince them. He showed his feeling of hatred for Chester Arlington was intense as well as unreasoning. He seemed to feel that, after providing him with money so long, after accepting him as a companion, after introducing him as belonging to a noble family, that Chester had no right to cast him off and refuse to maintain him longer. He seemed to feel that Chester was doing him a great injury, and he was burning with a desire for revenge.

Crauthers, Hogan, and Stark put their heads together and whispered.

"What do you think?" asked Hogan.

"Fellow's on the level," said Stark.

"Believe that's right," agreed Crauthers.

"Shall we trust him?"

"He may come handy."

"Just the one to get at Arlington."

"He may betray us," suggested Hogan.

"Put him to the test," recommended Stark.

"How?" questioned Crauthers.

"Require him to make some move against Arlington."

"Good idea!"

"First-class!"

"Let him make good by attacking Arlington," grinned Hogan.

"Will he do it?" whispered Stark.

"Try him! try him!" sibilated Crauthers.

Crauthers was eager for the test. He told himself it would be great satisfaction to bring about a clash between Chester and Bunol. It would give him the keenest satisfaction to watch Bunol knock Chester out. But could Bunol do it? Surely not unless he attacked Arlington unawares and without warning.

The Spaniard, however, was just the one to make such an attack. It was like him to spring on the back of an unsuspecting enemy.

"How much do you hate Chet Arlington?" asked Stark, as he turned to Bunol, who was now coolly smoking a cigarette.

"How much? You wait, you see."

"But you must prove that you hate him. We can't trust you unless you convince us. You have been his friend. How can we be sure you are not so still?"

"How you want me to prove it?"

"You must jump him!" palpitated Crauthers. "You must give him a good thumping."

"When?"

"First chance you get."

"All right," said Bunol. "I do that. I show you. Then you know I hate him same as I hate Deek Merriwell."

Crauthers was filled with the greatest satisfaction. Was it possible Bunol would keep his word? Then it would be fine to turn the fellow against Chet Arlington. One thing that had brought Mark Crauthers to the Den that evening was a desire to induce the others to stand with him in a plan to humiliate and punish Arlington. And now they had stumbled on a way of accomplishing that purpose without taking the work in their own hands.

So Bunol was again admitted to the circle, and they sat about the fire, warming their fingers and smoking. The blaze flared fitfully, lighting their faces and filling the interior of the Den with a pleasant glow.

Like brigands were they there in that snug retreat of the tangled woods. The wind did not reach them, for the thicket broke it. At times it rose and roared above their heads. The trees creaked at intervals, but in all that strip of woods no living creature save themselves seemed present.

Winter was at hand. The breath of King Cold was sweeping across the world. Yet they were warm and comfortable in their sheltered retreat. With blankets and a fire they could have passed the night there in an agreeable manner.

"I'm getting sick of school," said Crauthers, tenderly caressing his swollen eye. "I'd like to get away. I'd like to go West, or somewhere, and live in the woods, and just hunt and fish and do as I pleased. Wouldn't it be great, fellows?"

"It might be all right for a while," said Stark; "but you'd get sick of it pretty soon."

Crauthers shook his head.

"Don't you think it!" he exclaimed. "I used to think I'd go to sea, or run away and become a cowboy; but, of course, I've gotten over that, for I've found out going to sea isn't such fun, and the cowboy business is getting played out. All the same, a fellow could be a nomad and just hunt and fish and——"

"And tramp!" laughed Stark. "No, thank you! I have no desire to lead the life of a hobo."

"Oh, I don't mean to be a common hobo. I read the other day that there are lots of people in the country yet who make a good living by hunting. I'd like that. I like to hunt. I enjoy shooting squirrels and birds and things, and I know it would be great sport killing big game. I'd enjoy perforating a grizzly bear and then cutting its throat with my hunting-knife."

"Oh, that would be fine!" came sarcastically from Stark. "But it would not be such sport if you happened to wound the bear and he got you in a corner. I believe grizzlies are somewhat dangerous under such circumstances."

"Oh, I wouldn't mind the danger!" asserted Crauthers. "That would be part of the sport. I'm not afraid——"

Then he stopped short, for through the woods rang a long-drawn, lonely cry, like that of some prowling animal. Crauthers turned pale and showed symptoms of agitation.

"What was that?" he whispered.

The others were startled.

"Sounded like the cry of a wolf or a wildcat," muttered Hogan.

The wind rose, rushed through the tree tops and died away. As they sat there listening, the doleful cry was repeated, and this time it sounded much nearer than before. The thing was approaching!

CHAPTER XX—DONE IN THE DARK

One who has never been in the woods at night and heard such a strange, awesome, blood-chilling sound cannot understand the shuddery feeling that creeps over the flesh of the listener.

In his veins Crauthers seemed to feel his blood turning to ice-water. His heart stood still when the second cry came, then leaped and pounded so violently that there was a pain in his breast.

"There's one of your wild animals, Mark!" said Stark, who was not a little nervous himself, although he wished to hide the fact.

"For the Lord's sake keep still!" breathed Crauthers, his dark teeth knocking together tremulously as he uttered the words. "What can it be?"

"Here's your chance to hunt a wild animal," said Hogan. "Go out and tackle it."

"Why, you know I haven't a weapon!"

"Bunol will lend you his knife."

"No," said the Spaniard. "The knife I have not."

"Haven't even a knife?" gasped Crauthers. "I've got a revolver, but I didn't bring it. Great Scott! not one of us is armed! What if we are attacked?"

"Clubs, fellows!" said Hogan, as he began to pull over the little pile of wood.

"Out with the fire!" sibilated Crauthers, "That's what has attracted the thing."

Stark grasped him.

"Let the fire burn," he said. "Haven't you read how it will hold real wolves at bay?"

"That's no wolf!" said Hogan. "It may be a wildcat, but there are no wolves in these parts."

By this time the boys had each secured a club. The wind had lulled, and silence lay on the woods. Once more the cry came to their ears, and this time it was even nearer. But now there seemed something strangely human about it.

"Listen!" urged Bunol.

He placed his fingers to his lips and blew the signal of the Wolf Gang, a peculiar whistle that cut shrilly through the night.

"You fool!" snarled Crauthers. "Do you——"

Then he stopped, for the signal was answered in a similar manner. Again the wondering boys looked at one another.

"Our signal!" they said.

"I thought I knew who yelled to us," said Bunol, in satisfaction.

"There is only one fellow at Fardale who knows our signal," said Stark.

"That's Arlington!" declared Hogan.

"He comes," declared Bunol.

"What? Chet Arlington coming here? Why——"

"Somehow he think we may be here, and he comes," said the Spaniard.

Immediately Stark's suspicions were reawakened.

"It's a put up job!" he declared. "He sent you here, Bunol, to listen to our

plans, and now he is coming. Confound your treacherous skin, if you——"

"Hold on!" spoke the Spanish lad, in a low tone. "Better go slow. I have nothing to do with him. I hate him. I prove it to you."

"Prove it now!" urged Crauthers. "This is your chance!"

"How?"

"Go out there and lay for him in the darkness. When he comes along, soak him! That's the way to do it! I dare you to do it—I dare you!"

"I'll do it!" declared Miguel, at once, "Put out fire so he will not see. Quick!"

Crauthers dashed aside the brands with his foot and began to stamp them out.

"Hold on!" urged Stark. "I don't know about this business. Better be careful, or we'll all get into——"

"He can't prove a thing. If he's alone, we are four to his one. If he is bringing any one here, it's right to meet him and give it to him. Go on, Bunol."

Crauthers ground the dying embers beneath his feet, and the interior of the Den was plunged into darkness, save for the faint glow of a few coals.

"You wait!" whispered Bunol, as he crouched to creep forth. "You see now how much friend I am to him! I prove it to you! I get even with him!"

He still retained the club he had caught up from the pile of wood.

Stark was apprehensive, but Crauthers was shaking with eagerness, being seized by an intense longing to join in the attack on Arlington.

As they waited, the approaching person whistled again.

"He's crossing the tree-bridge!" palpitated Crauthers. "Bunol will be sure to be waiting for him when he reaches the ground on this side. Keep quiet!"

They did not have to wait long. Soon they heard the sound of a sudden struggle, a muffled, broken cry, and a heavy fall. Their hearts beat painfully after a period of shocked stillness, and it was not without difficulty that they breathed.

The night wind passed over the woods like a sigh.

Hogan started to say something in a whisper, but he was checked, and they waited yet a little longer. Then the voice of Miguel Bunol, soft and steady, called to them.

"Come out and see how I keep my word," it said. "I prove to you I do not lie."

Still they hesitated.

"What do you suppose the fool has done?" muttered Stark apprehensively. "I hope it's nothing serious."

He was the first of the remaining trio to creep forth from the Den. The others followed him, and they found Bunol waiting in the path.

"Come," he said, and they silently followed him to a little distance, pausing near the foot of the nearer tree that completed the bridge over the jungle.

"Here he is," said the Spaniard.

"Where?" asked Stark.

"At your feet." But they could see nothing.

Stark struck a match, sheltering it with his hollowed hands, as he cast the light downward. Hogan breathed forth an exclamation that betrayed the agitated state of his nerves.

For the flickering light fell on the pale face of Chester Arlington, who lay stretched on his back where he had fallen when struck down by the club in the hands of Miguel Bunol. Arlington's eyes were closed, and near his left temple something red trickled down from his hair.

"Good heavens!" gasped Hogan, as he dropped on his knees. "Why, this is carrying the thing too far! I'm afraid he's badly hurt!"

Crauthers said nothing, for in his heart there was a mingled sensation of satisfaction and fear.

"What in blazes have you done, Bunol?" demanded Stark, who was likewise alarmed.

"I soak him!" said the Spaniard. "That was what you say for me to do. I do it!"

The match fell from Stark's fingers. In darkness they stood huddled about that silent form stretched on the ground. Fear had gripped their hearts. They longed to turn and hurry from the spot, but curiosity held them yet a little longer.

Stark struck another match and bent over Arlington. He thrust a hand inside Chester's coat and felt for his heart. In his excitement he was quite unaware that he was feeling on the wrong side.

"My God!" he said huskily. "You have killed him, Bunol! His heart does not even flutter!"

"He should know better than to fool with Miguel Bunol," said the Spaniard.

By the gleam of the expiring match they glanced at Miguel's face and saw there no look of regret. The Spaniard was utterly pitiless, and remorse had not touched him. A little while before he had seemed the devoted friend of Chester Arlington, but his friendship had turned to the bitterest hatred, and his hatred had led to this terrible deed that might be—murder!

"Let's get out of here!" whispered Crauthers, "We didn't do it! We had nothing to do with it! We know nothing about it!"

Stark wanted them to stay a little longer, but panic seemed to clutch them. Crauthers went staggering up the tree trunk, with Hogan following close behind. They did not pause when Stark called to them.

"We better go, too," said Bunol.

"You go to the devil!" burst from Stark, suddenly overcome by repulsion caused by the treachery of the fellow. But he did not care to be left there with the

Spaniard and the fellow he had slain, so he hastened to cross over the trees and rush after his companions.

Like a cat, Bunol followed, and in the desolate woods was left the unfortunate lad who had been struck down by his erstwhile comrade.

The wind moaned through the trees with a dreary sound, dying away like a sigh. The woods were still. The trees and the thickets seemed to listen and wait for some sign of life in that motionless figure.

Stark called to Hogan and Crauthers as he stumbled along the path. He uttered exclamations of annoyance, pain, and anger when branches whipped him stingingly across the face. Three or four times he stumbled and fell, but he was up again and hurrying on in a twinkling.

"Where are those fools?" he grated. "What do they mean by running away and leaving me like this!"

He paused a moment to listen, and then he gave a great start, for right beside him a voice spoke:

"They run like cowards."

"Bunol!" exclaimed Stark, far from pleased. "What in blazes do you mean by following me so closely? I didn't hear you behind me."

"You all run off," said the Spanish lad. "Why you think I should stay?"

"You did the trick! You should have remained to make sure he was dead or alive, one or the other."

"Bah!" said the other. "If he is dead, it do no good to stay. If he is 'live, he come out of it after while, and I care not to be round. He no see who hit him. If he is 'live, I no want him to have some proof."

"You were a fool to strike so hard with that club!"

"When I hate, I hate hard. When I strike, I strike hard."

"But you were a fool! Think of it! You killed him!"

"Perhaps so, perhaps not."

"I know; I felt for his heart."

Stark was in a terrible state of mind, for murder was a thing to shake his nerves, even though it had not been meditated upon in advance. His brain seemed confused, and he could not decide on the proper course to pursue. The horror of the tragedy in the woods was on him, and he could not shake it off.

Bunol managed to hold himself well in hand, and his nerve seemed wonderful, making him more repellent to Stark.

"You killed him!" repeated Fred. "You may be hanged for it!"

"Why? Nobody need know."

"Such things are bound to come out. Besides, why should we put ourselves in a bad box by shielding you? You—you alone are to blame!"

"Ha!" cried Bunol derisively. "You say that? You? Why, you sent me to soak

him! You dare to blow on me? Ha! You be in bad scrape, too!"

Stark drew off from the fellow. The shadow of the gloomy woods was close at hand, and he turned from it. Several times he looked back, fearing to see a ghostly figure in pursuit.

Bunol clung close to him. They had not proceeded far before two other forms rose from behind an old stone wall. Stark halted, his heart giving a leap, but one of the two called, and he recognized the voice of Hogan.

Hogan and Crauthers were shivering. The cold night wind seemed to cut them to the bone. Their teeth chattered, and Crauthers seemed almost on the verge of collapse.

"Fellows," said Stark, "we were fools to run away like that. We should have stayed. Perhaps Arlington was not dead. He may lay there and die in the woods."

"I wouldn't go back there for a thousand dollars!" said Crauthers.

Hogan longed to go back, but he lacked the nerve.

They all turned on Bunol, whom they reviled for his act.

"Yah!" snarled the Spaniard. "You squeal! You just as bad! You send me to do it."

"Get away from us!" said Hogan. "We want nothing more to do with you!"

"Perhaps you blow on me?"

They made no answer, seeking to hurry from him, but he followed them up.

"You blow, I swear I kill you!" he cried. "I swear to do it, and I keep my word! You see! you see!"

They had been ascending a hill. Now they turned on him, and, as they did so, a cry of surprise came from the lips of Hogan.

"Good Lord, boys!" he exclaimed; "just look there!"

They saw him fling his arm out in a gesture toward the distant strip of woods. They looked, and what they saw was startling in the extreme. In the midst of the woods there was a reddish glare which rose and glowed and grew stronger every minute.

"The woods are afire!" gasped Crauthers.

"Sure thing!" came from the lips of Stark.

"Why, how——"

"It started from our fire in the Den! When the brands were scattered—that's what did it!"

"Boys," said Stark chokingly, "Arlington is there in the burning woods! If we had brought him out! Perhaps we can do it now! Come, fellows—come, let's go back!"

They caught hold of him.

"Too late!" said Crauthers. "See how the fire is spreading! The wind is driving it. The whole strip of woods will be a mass of roaring flame in a few

minutes!"

Miguel Bunol stood by, no words falling from his lips. In his heart there was a feeling of relief caused by sight of the rising fire.

"If the Spaniard had stayed away——" began Crauthers.

Bunol whirled on him.

"You first to propose I soak him!" he sneered. "Now you lose nerve! Now you are coward! But fire will wipe all out. It burn so nobody ever prove he was struck. He was caught in fire and couldn't get out. That is it."

Bunol was too much for them. Bad though they had been, the nerve of the Spanish lad after such a dark deed made him repulsive to them all.

"We had better get back to the academy in a hurry," said Stark. "We don't want to be out when the excitement over this fire starts. Let's hustle, fellows."

So they ran over the hill and on toward the academy. Behind them the fire rose and waved gleaming pennants to the clouds, which reflected the red glow. The wind moaned through the night and sent the flames leaping from tree to tree.

"We are all murderers!" whispered Crauthers, thinking of the boy left lifeless in the burning woods.

CHAPTER XXI—ON THE ACADEMY STEPS

They approached the academy cautiously, yet in a hurried manner. Lights were in the barracks windows, suggesting warmth and comfort within. Outside the driving wind was cold and biting. Away to the southwest the burning woods flung a red glow against the clouds, and this light reached even to the academy. They feared the light would betray them as they approached, and they slipped up swiftly.

Sure enough, some one was sitting on the steps outside the door. Who was it? They halted beneath the leafless trees and held a consultation. What was to be done?

"We must get in somehow," said Hogan.

"I'm sorry I came out to-night," averred Crauthers.

"It's been a bad night," came dolefully from Stark.

Miguel Bunol had kept near them, but he did not venture to take part in the conversation.

They watched the figure on the steps for some time. Now and then they looked away toward the strip of burning woods, and the reflected light revealed the terror in their eyes.

They thought of the boy who had been stricken down and left for the flames, and it robbed them of strength and courage and manhood.

"If that fool would leave the steps!" muttered Stark. "But he sits there like a dummy."

"I'm going in," chattered Hogan. "I'm almost frozen."

"You'll be recognized."

"I don't care."

When he started forward the others quickly decided to follow him, and in a body they advanced toward the steps where sat the motionless figure. They came up close to it, and then—they suddenly stopped. It was Bunol who uttered first an exclamation in Spanish, and then jabbered:

"Look! See! It is here!"

He was half-crouching, pointing at the figure, and his teeth rattled together like castanets, while his protruding eyes gleamed with terror.

Crauthers uttered a groan, and his legs nearly gave way beneath him.

"A ghost!" he whispered.

For the light of the burning woods seemed to show them sitting there on the steps, hatless, pale, a streak of red down across his temple, Chester Arlington. Never before had those boys been so startled. In fact, they seemed for a moment struck dumb and motionless with horror. Then one of them turned and ran, and the others followed, not uttering a word.

As they disappeared beneath the trees, Dick Merriwell stepped round a corner of the building and spoke to the lad who sat on the steps.

"I thought that you would give them a shock. You had better get up to your room now."

Chester Arlington, for Chester it was, made no retort and no move. He sat there dumbly, not even looking at Dick.

"Come," said young Merriwell, taking his arm.

Chester rose, and they entered the building. Dick assisted Arlington to his room.

"Are you sure you are all right?" asked young Merriwell.

Chester nodded.

"All right," he said, in a mechanical manner. "Only my head hurts some."

At the wash-bowl the blood was washed out of Chester's hair and from his face.

"Perhaps you had better have the doctor," suggested Dick, but Arlington objected, saying:

"I don't want the doctor! He'll ask too many questions. I'm going to take care of myself. Tell me again how it was you happened to find me there in the woods."

"It was not a case of happening to find you," said Dick. "I have been to the Den before. I had a fight on the tree-bridge once. I followed you to-night when I saw you striking out in that direction. You aroused my curiosity. But I was not familiar enough with the path through that jungle to keep very near you. So I was not on hand when you were tapped on the head, but I knew something had happened to you when those fellows rushed past my place of hiding. I crossed the bridge and stumbled over you. Then I discovered the fire, which was just starting. I shook some life into you, got you out and brought you here."

Arlington was gently drying his hair with a towel. He made a despairing gesture and dropped on a chair.

"It's fate!" he muttered. "I might have been burned to death in the woods but for you! Twice you have saved me from fire! It's no use, I've got to leave Fardale!"

"Why?"

"I can't stay here as your frie——" Chester stopped himself abruptly, remembering the change of policy he had decided upon. A few more words would ruin everything.

Could he play the part now? Could he continue to pretend to be friendly toward Dick while really plotting to injure him? That was the plan he had decided upon, but fate seemed determined to baffle him, to make sport of him.

Then he thought of the fellows who, a short time before, had pretended to be his friends. They had struck him down in the woods and left him to be consumed by the flames. Were these the kind of friends he had made since coming to Fardale? And Dick Merriwell had friends who would fight for him, suffer for him, sacrifice anything for him. Chester was doubly disgusted.

"I'm going away," he declared. "Merriwell, I' got to do it!"

"I don't see why."

"I do! I can't tell you. But one thing I am going to do before I go: I'm going to get even with those whelps who turned on me to-night!"

"You know them all?"

"Every one."

Chester tied a handkerchief about his head. His manner was rather queer, and he kept glancing at Dick out of the corners of his eyes.

"There is no more I can do?" said Dick, rising.

"No; you have done too much!"

"Too much?"

"Yes. Frankly, Merriwell, I'd rather any one else in the world should have given me this last lift."

Dick smiled. He realized that he had been able to pour hot coals on Arlington's head, and it gave him a feeling of satisfaction.

"Too bad you feel that way about it!" he said, retreating to the door.

"Good night," said Arlington shortly, and Dick went out.

"A thousand devils!" grated Arlington, when he was alone. "How am I going to keep it up? I hate him still, but he has made it almost impossible for me to again lift my hand against him. Yes, I believe I shall have to get out of Fardale. Mother wanted me to go, and I would not; but now it is different."

CHAPTER XXII—ANOTHER VICTORY FOR FARDALE

The escape of Chester Arlington from the burning woods seemed most astonishing to the four rascals who had left him there. Of course, they learned that it was Chester in the flesh, not his spirit, that they had seen sitting on the academy steps when they arrived there. At first it had seemed that he had not been given time to reach the academy ahead of them, even were he in the best of health and entirely unharmed; but when they came to consider the matter, they realized that they had spent considerable time in wrangling and in making a roundabout course that brought them to the academy as if they had come from a point almost opposite the burning woods. These small delays and this détour had given Arlington plenty of time to arrive at the academy ahead of them. Plainly, he had only been stunned by Bunol's blow, and had lost little time in getting out of the woods after recovering.

It is needless to say that the relief of the young rascals was great. Knowing nothing of Dick Merriwell's presence in the woods, they immediately agreed to swear sturdily that they were not there themselves, in case Chester made trouble for them.

But, to their wonderment, Arlington betrayed no great desire to even up the score. They fancied he would do this at once, but he ignored them. For a day or

two he wore a handkerchief bound about his head, explaining that he had slipped and fallen on the stone steps of the academy, cutting his scalp. Chester was not one given to hesitation when a falsehood served his purpose better than the truth.

It was Saturday morning of the day that Fardale was to meet Springvale that Miguel Bunol slipped like a phantom into Dick Merriwell's room.

Buckhart had gone out, and Dick was alone. Hearing the catlike step, Dick turned and confronted the young Spaniard.

"Well," he said, "what do you want here?"

Bunol paused and threw up one hand.

"I come to tell you something," he said swiftly. "You know Chester Arlington and I have been some friends. Mebbe you know we are not so any more? He try to throw me down. I do all I can for him. Well, I like it not much! From his friend I turn to hate him. When I hate, I hate a lot. Now I come to tell you that you will not win the football-game to-day. You think Chester Arlington change to be your friend, eh? Ha! Don't fool yourself some like that! He stay your enemy forever. He make believe he become your friend. That is done to fool you."

Dick smiled quietly, but the smile was followed by a frown.

"Go!" he exclaimed, pointing toward the door. "I want nothing to do with you."

"I come to tell you something you better hear. Look, you; yesterday this room was entered and some papers were stolen from you. How do I know? I know. I find out. I know who come here. I know Chester Arlington he do that. Why should he come? You have a locket. It have a picture of his sister. He is bound to have that. It is one reason why he pretend to be your friend. He think perhaps he find it here when you were out. He do not find it, but he find papers on your table, and them he take."

"You seem to know all about it," said Dick.

"I know. I watch him. Once he tell me all he mean to do. Now he trust me no longer, but I watch him. I know papers he take have all the football signals, all the plays, all the things you do on the field. You mark out all your plays. You put down your signals. Yesterday you look them over. You work out one other new play. Then you have to go quick to classroom, and leave papers on table. When you come again they are gone. Ha!"

Dick was silent. The papers had been stolen, as Bunol described. His room had been entered by some one with a duplicate key, for the door was closed and locked when he returned to discover the papers missing.

"You know what he do with papers?" asked the Spanish lad.

Dick shook his head.

"He send them to captain of Springvale football team. To-day you see. To-day Springvale beat you. Springvale know all your signals—all your plays.

Chester Arlington he get even with you 'cause you make him resign from committee."

There seemed some reason in Bunol's talk, and Dick wondered if the fellow did not speak the truth.

"How much you give me to trap him?" asked Miguel craftily, "I know how to do it. He lie to you. He make you think he is to you a friend now, when he is more your enemy than before. He play you false. I find a way to trap him, then you can make him get out of school. How much you give? You pay me, I do it."

The thought of having anything to do with Bunol was extremely repulsive to Dick.

"You are a traitor to him," he said. "I make it a practise to have no dealing with traitors. I do not trust you, Bunol, and so you may as well go."

The visitor was astonished. He could not understand Dick at all. To him it was incomprehensible that Merriwell should not eagerly grasp at anything to crush an enemy like Arlington. Miguel began to chatter excitedly, but Dick sternly ordered him from the room.

"Fool!" snarled the Spanish lad, as he backed out "You see if Chester he do not beat you in the end!"

When the Spaniard was gone Dick thought it all over and worried about it. If Bunol told the truth, it was likely that Springvale would come prepared with a knowledge of Fardale's methods and system that would make the game a walkover for the visitors. He thought of going to Chester and telling him plainly what had been proposed by Bunol. With this idea in mind, he left his room and ran into Arlington at the head of the stairs. Chester listened to Dick's words, but his manner showed that he was aroused.

"So that is Miguel Bunol's game?" he exclaimed, when Dick had finished. "Merriwell, it's a lie! I did not take the papers from your room, and I know nothing about them. I brand the whole yarn as a lie from Bunol, and he must be the one who did the trick, else he would not know so much about it."

Dick was not satisfied, but he could do nothing further.

Springvale had a husky-looking football-team, and it appeared on Fardale Field that afternoon with a swagger of confidence that seemed to betoken their belief in an easy victory.

Thor, their big full-back and captain, was a magnificent-looking fellow, with a shaggy mane of yellow and fearless blue eyes. He seemed a youthful reincarnation of the Scandinavian war god whose name he bore, if a god may be spoken of as reincarnated.

Springvale village had plenty of confidence in its team, and almost a hundred rooters had accompanied the young gladiators to Fardale to cheer them on to victory.

On the other hand, the villagers at Fardale had begun to believe the academy team could not be defeated, upon which their interest in the games waned, for which reason but a few of them came out. The cadets were on hand as usual, but the bleachers and ground were not crowded.

Springvale, like many of the other teams, had an almost entirely new line-up of players.

FARDALE		SPRINGVALE
Shannock	Right end	Grant
Jolliby	Right tackle	Clark
Dare	Right guard	Hooper
Tubbs	Center	Foster
Bradley	Left guard	Rowe
Kent	Left tackle	Osgood
Buckhart	Left end	Dodge
Smart	Quarter-back	Emery
Merriwell	Right half-back	Wellington
Darrell	Left half-back	Phelps
Singleton	Full-back	Thor

At a distance Thor looked handsomer than big Bob Singleton, but closer inspection showed that Singleton was of a higher order of intelligence. Thor was a fine animal, in almost perfect condition, delighting in physical contests, but he lacked a certain something that showed in Bob's mild eye and lazy, well-modulated voice.

Phelps was a lively, slender fellow, while Wellington was swift on his feet and a great dodger and punter. Emery was a trifle larger than Smart, but not a whit quicker witted or capable. Springvale's line was heavier than Fardale's, but not a great deal heavier.

The game began with Fardale having the kick-off, and Singleton booted the leather to the twenty-yard line, where Wellington took it and sent it back with a magnificent kick that dropped it into the hands of Singleton. Big Bob started to run, found himself cornered by a tackler, and passed the ball to Dick Merriwell as he was dragged down. Dick went on, taking the ball to the thirty-five-yard line.

Then Fardale lined up for the attack, and Springvale prepared to hold the

home team in check. The game was on.

The first assault on center was hurled back, and an effort to go around the left end was repulsed, a funnel-play directed at the right wing was a complete fizzle. Springvale seemed to anticipate every move and meet it quickly, destroying its effectiveness.

"They have our code!" muttered Dick. "The Spaniard was right! They know our plays!"

Fardale was forced to kick in short order. The visitors took the ball at the twenty-five-yard line, and the battle was shifted to Springvale's territory, but with Fardale on the defense.

Springvale worked swiftly, using no signals at the start, which made it apparent that the team had entered the field with a series of plays agreed upon.

Wellington went round the right end for four yards, being pulled down by Dick. Next it seemed that Phelps had been sent to try the left end, but the ball was passed to Wellington, who again circled the right end, making three yards in spite of Dick, who had detected the trick.

A mass play was slammed into Fardale's left wing. Kent went down before it, and Clark sat on him, while the tide rolled over them, the ball being carried to the forty-yard line. Kent was angry when he got up. Clark had fouled him, but the umpire had not seen it. Clark grinned into Don's face.

"Wait! Wait!" said Don. "My turn will come."

Springvale had Fardale going, and it kept the work up until the home team was pushed to its own twenty-yard line.

Dick was desperate.

"The Spaniard told the truth!" he kept repeating to himself. "Chester Arlington has betrayed us again! I was a fool to think he might be decent! It isn't in him!"

He remembered how Chester had tried to bribe Jim Watson to steal the signal-code and diagram of plays at the very outset of the season. Watson had fooled him by supplying a false code and a lot of hastily faked-up plays. But a fellow who would think of betraying Fardale once could not reform so easily.

Both Arlington and Bunol must leave Fardale. Dick had endured quite enough. He had chosen to hold his hand on account of June, but now—well, not even for June could he see Chester Arlington betray the old school and work it harm.

Springvale seemed on the verge of success when the ball was lost by off-side play.

Fardale went at the enemy earnestly, but immediately after the first play the referee blew his whistle and set the cadets back for a foul.

Kent had been detected in an effort to get square with Clark, and everything

seemed going wrong. To cap it all, Smart fumbled the ball and made a bad pass to Darrell.

Hal lost the ball. Hooper came through like the wind, gathered up the ball without stopping, and on he went over Fardale's line for a touch-down. Dismay struck the watching cadets dumb.

Seeing this, Miguel Bunol chuckled and muttered to himself:

"Now mebbe Deek Merriwell he will believe me when I tell him they know all his signals and his plays."

Chester Arlington seemed to be filled with the greatest dismay.

"It's a shame!" he declared. "It was an accident, anyway! They can never score again."

Crauthers, Stark, and Hogan were not far from him.

"He's turned his coat, all right," said Stark. "I did think it possible we had made a mistake, but it's a sure thing that he is trying to get in with the Merriwell crowd."

"Well," said Hogan, "I hear that it was Merriwell who brought him out of the burning woods the other night. Now will somebody kindly explain to me how Merriwell happened to be there and where he was that we did not encounter him."

"Not I!" growled Crauthers. "But I have found out that it is impossible to account for Merriwell's acts."

"Twice, then, has Merriwell pulled Arlington out of the fire," said Stark. "I suppose that makes it seem to Chet that he must flop over and join the Merriwell crowd; but we've all heard him swear a hundred times that nothing on earth or in the depths below could ever change him or make him friendly toward Merriwell."

"Plainly that was gas," said Crauthers. "But I'm glad he wasn't burned in that fire."

"Can't understand why he has not tried to settle with us," admitted Hogan. "He must have known we were in the Den. And so it must be evident to him that some of us swatted him on the koko."

At this moment the playing of the two elevens took all their attention, and this line of conversation was abandoned.

Springvale had kicked a goal. There had been some volleying after the kick-off, and then Wellington had made an effort to run with the ball, but had been brought to earth by Buckhart.

Fardale fought furiously now, and the visitors were unable to make gains as easily as they had at the outset. With every moment the home team seemed to grow stronger.

Dick resolved to cast aside the usual methods of play. He settled to straight football. The line held well, and Springvale could not advance the ball. She was compelled to kick.

Darrell took the ball and leaped away from Grant, who missed a tackle by a foot. Hal got away for fifteen yards before being pulled down.

Dick spoke a word to Smart. The plays peculiar to Fardale were abandoned. There was no funnel, no center-back, no ends around, but straight hammering football, smashing into the enemy's line.

On the benches Chester Arlington rose and cheered. Fardale gained yard by yard. Springvale held as well as she could, but the cadets were at their best.

During the remainder of the first half the tide of battle shifted and swayed, but almost all the time the ball was kept in Springvale's territory. Twice Fardale had the ball down close to the visitors' line, but both times a touch-down was missed by a fluke or a fumble. It was disheartening, but Dick managed to keep the courage of the boys up, and they continued the work up to the moment when the whistle blew.

As he was leaving the field with his dirty, sweat-stained comrades, Dick saw Miguel Bunol hastening toward him.

"What you think now?" asked the Spaniard triumphantly. "You see they know every play. I tell you truth. What you do? You fail to expose Chester Arlington?"

"I shall do something when the game is over," said Dick grimly.

Bunol seemed to take it for granted that he meant to strike a blow at Chester, and his heart rejoiced. Without delay, he sought Arlington out.

"Well," he said, "how you like it?"

Chester shrugged his shoulders.

"Too bad Springvale made that touch-down," he said.

"You feel bad!" sneered Bunol.

"Everybody does," said Chester, with apparent sincerity.

"You feel worse after game, mebbe," said Bunol.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Wait! You find out! Springvale know all Fardale's plays. How she know them?"

"How do you suppose I know?"

"Perhaps you don't. Deek Merriwell he want to see you after game."

"See me?"

"He want to see you."

"What for?"

"You find out," said Bunol, with an insulting smile. "Perhaps you like it!"

Now, Chester felt like striking Miguel, but he turned from the fellow, shrugging his shoulders again. Did he show guilt? Was his face pale? Did he tremble a bit?

After the intermission Fardale returned to the field without a change in the

team. One change had been made in Springvale's line-up. Clark, who started the rough-house work, had "got his," and he was replaced by a substitute named Mullen.

The second half was a hustler from the very start. Both teams went into the game to win, and the swift playing set the spectators wild with excitement, and for full ten minutes it seemed an even thing. Then Fardale got the ball on Springvale's fifty-yard line.

Dick spoke to Smart, who nodded. A wedge was sent at the enemy's center, protecting Singleton, who carried the ball, but Springvale tore the wedge to pieces.

Just as a tackler came through, Singleton tossed the ball out to Dick, who had kept clear of the wedge. Dick took the ball and was away like a flash. Shannock blocked Dodge, and Merriwell rounded the end.

Jolliby slipped through and flung himself before Phelps, who made a try for Dick. Phelps pulled Jolliby down.

Thor came cutting in. He was in Dick's path, and there seemed no way to escape him. The watchers held their breath as Dick made a weak effort to try to dodge to the left of the big full-back. Thor laughed and shot forward for a tackle. Dick leaped like a panther to the right, changing his course with such amazing suddenness that he escaped the hooklike hands of Thor.

Wellington had been rushing down on them, but Merriwell quickly swung away, making it a stern chase. In vain Wellington tried to get near enough for a flying tackle. Dick kept on amid the wildest excitement and carried the ball over the line for Fardale's first touch-down. But the ball had been carried over at the extreme corner of the field, making it necessary to punt it out.

Dick punted the ball, Darrell being placed to catch it. Somehow Hal missed, and the chance for a goal was lost.

"That settles it!" groaned a cadet. "We'll never have another chance to tie the score in this game!"

But the success of that wedge-play had given Fardale new life. Dick reverted to the well-known plays of the team and sprung them on the enemy in rapid succession. Of course, Smart was the one who called for these plays, but he was working under Dick's direction. The funnel-play made a gain twice and then was stopped. Center-back took Springvale by surprise and secured nine yards. Even the old ends around worked twice for fair gains.

"Somebody was mistaken," thought Dick, in great relief. "Springvale does not know our plays. It was freshness and good luck that enabled them to check us at first as they did."

This he became perfectly confident of as the game went on. As confidence returned the enemy was pushed harder and harder. Dick knew the game must be drawing to a close. Once he was tempted to try for a field goal, but did not do so,

realizing that a miss meant certain defeat for Fardale.

With the ball seven yards from Springvale's goal, Fardale was held for three downs without gaining an inch. Then Singleton fell back, and it seemed certain he was about to try to kick a goal from the field. Springvale looked for that—and was fooled.

The ball went to Dick, who followed Tubbs through center. The fat boy tore a hole through the line and kept on far enough to let Dick through, and out over the enemy's line shot young Merriwell, barely in the nick of time. The goal was kicked, and Fardale had won.

As Dick was entering the gymnasium, Elbert Bradbury, a Fardale lawyer, spoke to him. Dick paused, and Bradbury said something that caused him to show great interest.

"All right," said young Merriwell. "Just as soon as I can take a shower and get into my clothes." Then he disappeared into the gym.

When he came out he saw Bradbury again, and this time Louis Thor, the yellow-headed captain of the visiting team, was with the lawyer.

"I congratulate you, Merriwell," said Thor, putting out a large hand. "I thought we had you fellows, but you won out in the end, a trick Fardale generally does."

Then the three walked away together, talking earnestly. Some time later Miguel Bunol was summoned to Dick's room. He answered the summons. When he entered, he found Dick, Brad Buckhart, Chester Arlington, and Lawyer Bradbury there.

Miguel looked the gathering over coolly.

"Bunol," said Dick, "I have determined to make a thorough investigation of your charge against Arlington here, and that is why I called you. He is here to defend himself as best he can."

"What do you mean?" asked Bunol, smiling.

"You know. You came to me and declared that Arlington entered this room and stole certain papers. You also said that he turned those papers over to the Springvale team."

"Well?" questioned Bunol coolly.

"Do you repeat your accusation?"

"I do."

"You know it is a lie!" cried Chester hotly, springing from his seat.

"It is true," returned the Spanish youth.

The lawyer pulled Chester back.

"Wait," he said, facing Miguel. "How do you know this?"

"No matter. I know it."

"But we insist on knowing how you know it. Did you see him enter this

room?"

"Mebbe so."

"Did you see him? Answer yes or no."

"What right have you to ask?"

"I am a lawyer. Perhaps he has engaged me to defend him. You must answer."

Bunol seemed a trifle nervous now.

"Yes, I see him," he huskily declared.

"How did you happen to see him? What were you doing in this part of the building?"

"I follow him here."

"Why?"

"Because I suspect. Because I want to find out what he do. He turn on me. Once he pretend to be my friend. I do many things for him. When he turn on me, then I hate him. I make up my mind I catch him in trap. That is why I catch him. That is why I follow him here."

"And you saw him take the papers?"

"I see him. He leave the door a little open when he slip in. I come quick and still to door and peer through. I see him pick up papers from table."

"You have said they were plans for football plays and so forth. How did you know that?"

"Oh, I hear him laugh and see him have the plans."

"But you told Mr. Merriwell that he had turned the papers over to the Springvale captain. How did you know that?"

"I hear him say to himself that he will do so. That is what I suppose he do."

"Mr. Thor!" called Bradbury.

Captain Thor, of the Springvale team, stepped out of the alcove in which stood Dick's bed. At sight of the yellow-headed young gladiator Bunol changed color.

"Mr. Thor," said the lawyer, with a motion toward Miguel, "do you know this boy?"

"Yes, sir," was the prompt answer. "He came to me at the North Hotel today and gave me a lot of papers, which he said were the signals and plays of the Fardale team."

"It is a lie!" cried Miguel.

"He thought I would be glad to get them," said Thor. "He urged me to use them and never say anything about them. He seemed to take it for granted that I would not expose him, as he had done me such a great favor."

"You did not promise not to expose him?"

"No."

"What did you do with the papers?"

"I called in Charles Rowe, a member of the team, and we took the papers at once to your office, delivering them into your hands, and watching you seal them in an envelope."

"Is this the envelope?" asked Bradbury, producing a large, square envelope.

"I should say so."

"What do you wish me to do with it, and the papers it contains?"

"Turn them over to Captain Merriwell. I requested you to do so before the game, sir."

"Business prevented; but it is all right now. Here you are, Mr. Merriwell, and I think you will find the papers all right. As for the young man who stole them," and the lawyer turned to Bunol, "if you see fit, you can make a lot of trouble for him."

"All I ask of him," said Dick, "is that he leave Fardale without delay. He must go!"

Dick pointed to the door, and Bunol slunk out.

CHAPTER XXIII—CHESTER FINDS A MASTER

Miguel Bunol was waiting for Chester Arlington in the corridor. Chester started and hesitated when he saw the dark shadow skulking in the gloom by the door of his room.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"To see you!" returned the Spanish lad, in a low tone that chilled Chester's blood.

"You had better get out!" exclaimed Arlington. "I do not trust you."

He was afraid of Bunol, even though he knew Dick Merriwell had captured and retained the knife the young Spaniard generally carried. Miguel knew Chester was afraid, and he laughed in a low, cold manner.

"You come," he commanded. "I want to talk to you. I have some few things to say, and I say them. If I not say them to you, then I go to Professor Gunn, and I talk to him. You take your choice: you talk to me in your room where nobody

hear us, or you let me go to Professor Gunn."

"You had better pack up and get out of here in a hurry. If you go to Professor Gunn, it is likely the professor will have evidence enough to cause you to be placed under arrest. You know what has happened. Captain Thor, of the Springvale team, has betrayed you, and——"

"We will not talk of it out here," said Bunol sharply. "In your room we talk. Either that, or I go to Professor Gunn and tell him a big lot of many things."

"Confound it, Bunol! I'm not to blame for the scrape you are in! You brought it on yourself, and now——"

"All right!" exclaimed Bunol, turning away. "I go to the professor."

He seemed in earnest, but Arlington's heart was suddenly filled with apprehension, and he called to the dark-faced lad.

"Wait!" he said. "If it is only to talk to me, you can come into my room."

"As you like," said Miguel, pausing. "If you like it better for me to talk to professor, then I go to him."

"I'll have to make some sort of a bargain with him!" thought Chester. "He can make it very uncomfortable for me if he goes to old Gunn and tells all he knows."

So he put aside his fear of Bunol, unlocked his door and asked the young Spaniard in.

Arlington hastened to light a lamp, and removed the shade so that the light fell on Bunol's face. He wished to watch that face, thinking it might be the safest thing to do.

Bunol closed the door carefully. He came and stood by the open fireplace.

"Now, what do you wish to say to me?" asked Chester.

"I am in bad scrape," said Bunol.

"That's right," nodded the other lad.

"You shall help me out of it."

"I?"

"*Si*, Chester Arlington; I say you."

"Well, you must think me a very forgiving chap!" said Chester, with a sneer. "You know how you got into this scrape. You did it trying to hurt me. You misjudged Thor. You had no doubt about his using the plans, and so you placed yourself in his hands. But he did not use them. Instead he turned the papers over to Lawyer Bradbury, who sealed them up and delivered them to Dick Merriwell. In the meantime, you had made arrangements to have the blame of stealing the papers thrown on my shoulders. But it did not work, and you found yourself in the soup when Thor confronted you a few minutes ago in Merriwell's room and swore that you gave him the papers.

"The jig is up, Bunol. By this piece of business you have ruined yourself

here at Fardale, and you will have to leave the academy. Dick Merriwell gives you until morning to depart. He will let you go without punishment if you get out quietly. You'll have to go."

Bunol leaned gracefully against the side of the fireplace.

"If I go," he said, "you go with me."

Chester's heart leaped.

"Why, hang it!" he exclaimed; "what do you mean?"

"I mean the thing that I say. You bring me here to Fardale, I take you with me when I go from here."

"I guess not! You'll go, and I shall stay."

"Then soon you will be expelled in disgrace, which will please your mother, which will give your sister great happiness, which will make your father proud!"

"Expelled?"

"I say it, for I shall go to Professor Gunn, and I shall tell him all the many things you do, of which I know. I shall tell him how you do so many things to injure Deck Merriwell. How you cut down the bridge, so that Merriwell and the girl come so near to drown. I shall tell who was there, so they be called to prove my word. I shall tell how——"

"See here, Bunol, what's your price? I will pay you——"

"Now you talk sense!" said Bunol, in satisfaction. "You know well I can ruin you quick. You should not think my price it is small. If so you think it is to fool yourself."

Chester was desperate. Already he had drawn so heavily upon his mother that he feared to ask for more money. His mother had confidence in him; she believed him the finest lad alive; it would not do to let her know that he must have money in order to hush the tongue of this fellow who might disgrace him.

"If you ask for much," said Arlington desperately, "you will not get it, for I cannot get it myself."

"You get all money you want."

Chester explained how impossible it was for him to pull another large sum, but his words did not seem to impress Bunol, who grimly said:

"It is one thousand dollars I will have if I go."

"And you know I can't get it! Confound you! you're crazy!"

The Spanish lad shrugged his shoulders.

"It is the price," he said coldly.

Arlington paced the room, his face pale and his eyes gleaming. His hands were thrust deep into his pockets.

"I was a lunatic to place myself in your power!" he finally snarled.

"I have seen you use your power on others," said Bunol. "I know how you have no pity. I know how you make the members of the athletic committee do

just as you say, because you find some of their secrets and you threaten to expose them. I know what you do to Joe Savage when you have the I O U papers he give you and he is afraid you send them to his father. Now I treat you just as I see you treat them. You have to come to time."

Arlington threw up his hands.

"I'll quit!" he groaned. "I'll get out of Fardale! It's all I can do!"

"No," said Miguel "There is one thing other you can do."

"What?"

"Deek Merriwell make to your mother a promise not to do some thing to injure you."

"Well?"

"You go to him; you tell him it ruin you if Miguel Bunol must leave the school. Then you say to him that if he does not mean to be to you the ruin he must keep it still about Miguel Bunol. He must not make it so that Bunol must leave the school. You do that, so that I can stay, and I will be still about you."

"Great heavens!" groaned Chester, dropping on a chair and passing a trembling hand across his forehead. "You ask me to go to Dick Merriwell and beg—beg, beg! I can't do that!"

"Oh, all right!" said Miguel, coolly rolling a cigarette.

The fellow was not disturbed, for he felt that he had conquered. He saw that Arlington was wavering and ready to surrender. It was gall and wormwood to Chester to be forced into appearing as a supplicant to Merriwell, whom in his heart of hearts he still hated as much as ever, but there was no other escape for him. He must humble himself before Merriwell or get out of Fardale. If he defied Bunol the fellow would disgrace him; he had not the least doubt of that.

"I'll pay you the thousand dollars," he suddenly said.

Bunol lifted his heavy black eyebrows in surprise.

"Why, you say you cannot get it," he observed, and it was plain that he felt disappointment in this decision of Chester.

"I can't—all at once."

"Then——"

"I'll get part of it—say a hundred dollars at first. I will pay you that. You leave the academy. Later I will get the rest as fast as I can and send it to you."

Bunol struck a match and lighted his cigarette.

"I am not so much a big fool," he said. "I take it all at once. That is the only way."

"But you'll get it! I can't pay you all at once. It will be hard to raise the hundred. I shall have to sacrifice many things. I shall have to let some of this stuff here go. But I will do that. It is all I can do."

Bunol had not taken three whiffs from the cigarette, but he flung it into the

grate and turned toward the door.

"Where—where are you going?" asked Chester unsteadily.

"To Professor Gunn," was the answer.

"Come back here—come back!" cried Arlington, jumping up in the greatest agitation.

Bunol paused.

"Why come back?" he asked. "It is no arrangement we can make."

"Yes, we can!" declared Chester. "I'll go to Merriwell and see what I can do!"

He had surrendered.

It was the hardest thing in the world for Chester Arlington to humble himself to Dick Merriwell, but he realized that it was the only thing he could do to save himself. Chester was proud, and the thought of disgrace at Fardale galled him terribly. He had felt confident of final triumph over the lad he hated.

To leave Fardale Academy in disgrace—he could not think of it! But Bunol had made it necessary for him to go to Dick Merriwell and beg a favor in order to save himself. He could not force himself to it at once. That evening Dick went over to the village, and Chester waited for him on the road.

The moon was shining clear and cold as Dick came out of the village and strode briskly away toward the academy. His shadow kept close beside him, gliding along over the ground.

Beneath a leafless maple-tree just on the outskirts of the village Arlington waited until he saw Dick appear. He had been kicking his heels together and moving about to keep warm. At once he stepped out to meet Merriwell.

"Hello!" exclaimed Dick in surprise, for he recognized Chester.

"Thought you would be along soon," said Arlington. "That's why I stopped here and waited."

"You were waiting for me?"

"Yes."

Arlington walked at Dick's side. He hesitated and choked as he attempted to speak.

"What's his game now?" thought Merriwell.

"See here," Chester suddenly exclaimed, "I'm compelled to ask a favor of you, Merriwell. I don't like to do it, you may be sure of that, but I have to do it, regardless of my feelings."

"Go ahead," said Dick, suppressing a smile.

"You know Bunol?"

"I should say so!"

"You know the fellow came here with me. My father and his father were friends, that's how it happened," lied Chester. "I'm sorry I suggested to him that he come here. He's a treacherous rascal."

"Which he proved in stealing those papers and trying to put the theft on you. Evidently he wishes to injure you now."

"Yes. He's sore on me. That's just it. He wishes to injure me, and he'll do it, I'm afraid. You know every fellow gets into some pranks. Well, I'm no saint—never pretended to be. This snake has found out everything I have done. You know about that bridge trick, Merriwell. I cut the bridge, but I did it to duck you, because you ducked me before that. I wanted to get even. I didn't mean to throw Doris Templeton into the water."

"If I had fancied that you did," said Dick grimly, "you'd not be in Fardale now, I tell you that! If you had not done your best to save her after she was swept into the pool, I should have carried the matter before the faculty. The fact that you nearly lost your life trying to save her caused me to hold my hand and let you off without further punishment."

"That was kind of you," said Chester humbly, although his heart was seething with rage at the thought of being humbled before his enemy. "I appreciate it now, even if I haven't before. Then you know about that little joke of shutting you in the old vault. You got square for that, too."

Chester shivered as he thought of the ducking-stool rigged up by Dick and his friends. Arlington and his four companions were all ducked in the cold waters of Lily Lake.

"Yes," laughed Dick, "I believe that little piece of business was beautifully squared up."

"In fact, you have evened up for about everything."

"Perhaps you are right."

"And you have not been the fellow to blow on me; I give you that credit."

"Thanks!" said Dick, with a touch of sarcasm.

"But now here is this snake Bunol who swears he will go to the faculty and tell all he knows before he leaves Fardale!"

"Well, that's rough!"

"Rough! Why, he'll ruin me!"

"He may, that's a fact."

"If he does it I'll be hauled over the coals and expelled from the school."

"It looks that way."

"Now, see here, Merriwell, you're not such a bad fellow."

"Thanks!" said Dick again, with still greater sarcasm.

"I know I have no claim on you, and it takes a lot of nerve for me to come to you and ask a favor; but you can keep this Spaniard from throwing me down, and——"

"I can do that?"

"Sure thing."

"How?"

"By letting up on him. By not forcing him to leave the school."

"And you have come to ask me to let up on him?" asked Dick, in great surprise, for it seemed impossible to him that a haughty, overbearing fellow like Arlington could bring himself to that.

"I have. I confess that I do it to save myself. But you know it would be mighty rough on me."

"I am not to blame," said Dick grimly. "If Bunol betrays you, blame yourself for choosing such a companion and confidant."

Chester's heart dropped.

"You—you mean that you'll carry out your threat—that Bunol will have to go?" he faltered.

"Why shouldn't he?" said Dick. "He is not a fit fellow to have in the school. The matter is out of my hands. Lawyer Bradbury——"

"But you might keep him still. I am sure he would keep still if you asked him."

"Why should I do such a thing? Bunol is my enemy. He is a treacherous, dangerous fellow. You are not my friend."

Arlington began to feel desperate.

"I have not been," he said; "but it might be different in the future."

"No!" exclaimed Dick. "I do not believe it possible that you and I can ever become friends. There is nothing in common between us."

Chester was surprised at this, for he had fancied that by his actions within the last few days he had led Dick into thinking him a friend at last. Now he realized that he had not deceived Merriwell in the least.

"He seems to see right through me!" thought Chester despairingly. "What can I do?"

A thought came to him of a last resort.

"Very well," he said, with a sigh. "The jig is up with me! I'll have to skip out before I'm kicked out. My sister objected in the first place about coming here to this out-of-the-way place to see me. She won't have to come here any more."

Dick's heart gave a great thump. June Arlington would not come to Fardale any more! True, if Chester left the school there would be nothing to bring her there.

Arlington walked along with his head down, but he glanced sideways toward Dick to note the effect of his words. Again Dick felt that he could read Chester's motive in speaking as he did. He knew Dick was interested in June, that Dick would wish to see her again; and for this very reason he had hinted that she would come no more to Fardale. But it was true that there would be nothing to bring June to Fardale if Chester left the place.

Dick walked onward in silence, a tumult of thoughts in his mind. If he forced Bunol from the school then Arlington would have to go. If Arlington went, June would come no more to the village.

This was the thought that made Dick waver and hesitate. He remembered her as he had seen her last. Her eyes had smiled upon him. She was his friend. Even at this moment he carried her locket, in which was her picture.

Arlington was wise enough to give Dick time.

"Hold your hand until I can pack up and get away," he finally said. "I'll leave some time before Monday night."

After a few minutes, Dick observed:

"I'll think this matter over, Arlington. Perhaps you won't have to go."

"I've won!" thought Chester exultantly.

CHAPTER XXIV—A LONG WORD

So Miguel Bunol triumphed for the time and remained in Fardale. He smiled over his success and felt that his power over Chester Arlington was complete. At the same time, he chuckled at the thought that Chester had been able to sway Dick Merriwell, and Bunol was shrewd enough to understand how this had been accomplished. He knew all about Dick's admiration for June Arlington, and he had counted on that to win for him in case Chester could be made desperate enough to humble himself before Dick.

Chester felt mean enough. The fact that Dick had held his hand did not make him, in his heart of hearts, any friendlier toward the captain of the football-team. He had been compelled to ask a favor of Dick, to almost beg for it, to let Dick know he could cause him to leave Fardale! Ah! that was bitterness. Of course, Merriwell chuckled over it to himself. Of course he would put on superior airs. Oh, it was hard to endure!

Such thoughts as these made Chester satisfied that he hated Dick more than ever before.

"But I must not let him know it—now!" he said. "I've got to pretend that I have changed to a friend! That is a part of the game. Some day, when I have

crushed him—and crush him I will!—I'll laugh at him and tell him I always hated him. My day of triumph shall come!"

Are you sure of it, Chester? Already you have tangled yourself in a terrible snare, and your efforts to escape may bring about your further entanglement. Already your plots and tricks have brought you to a point where you have seen disgrace staring you in the face. Already by way of punishment you have been compelled to seek a favor of the lad you hate so bitterly—have been compelled to humble yourself to him.

The plotting, crafty, wicked fellow may seem to succeed for a time. His plans may seem to go right, and his prosperity may cause those who know of his crookedness to wonder; but surely the day comes when he finds his plotting has brought about his undoing, when he realizes that at last his scheming has wrought disaster and disgrace for him. But Chester Arlington was young, and he had not learned this great lesson of life. He fancied that luck had brought about his present misfortune, not that it was the direct result of his own bad acts.

Of course Brad Buckhart expected Dick to drive Miguel Bunol from the school, and he could not understand it at all when Dick decided to hold his hand and let the Spanish lad remain. For once Dick did not make the explanation full and complete. He did not confess to the Texan that the departure of Bunol from Fardale meant also the departure of Arlington, that Arlington's departure meant that his sister would come to the village no more, for which reason Dick did his best to hush the matter up and let it drop quietly.

"I allow I never reckoned he was quite that easy," muttered the Westerner regretfully. "When I first knew him he had a temper like cold steel, and he was forced to hold on to it all the time. Somehow he has changed. Holding on to that temper has become easy for him, and he's master of it now for sure. All the same, he'd be the devil let loose if it ever did break away so he couldn't control it. I judge he'd be all the worse for having held it in check so long. If it ever does break away from him and he has real cause to kill somebody he'll do it quicker than a flash of lightning."

Brad believed that he understood Dick better than any other fellow in the school did, and there was good reason why he should, being his roommate and seeing so much of him. He knew Dick had not gained the mastery over his quick temper and unreasoning disposition without a struggle, and he admired him for it.

The agitation over Arlington's fight to get on to the athletic committee and his sudden and amazing resignation from it had died out. No one save a certain few understood why Chester had resigned almost immediately after being elected. Sometimes the boys talked it over a little and wondered at it.

But things were moving at Fardale. Football-game followed football-game.

The hockey-team had been organized and was making ready for an active season. The basketball-team had been in practise some time. There was talk of an indoor baseball-team.

Of course, athletics and sports were not the only things to take up the time at the school. The boys had their studies and drills. The members of the football-team had been excused from drilling during the season, but the others were put through their paces regularly. Of these drills, and inspections, and parades little need be said here, for those characters in whom we are most interested had made up the football-team and took no part in the exercises.

But there were studies and lectures they could not miss. Professor Gunn might be easy with them; not so Professor Gooch. He demanded their attendance and attention in the class-room. He was opposed to athletics of all sorts, and he took delight in detaining members of the football-team to listen to some dry-as-dust talk of his when they felt that they should be out on the field getting in some practise.

As Professor Gooch, his spectacles on his nose, droned away one day about the Punic Wars, and Hannibal, and Rome, and the destruction of Carthage, Ted Smart noticed that Billy Bradley, who sat next to him, was napping. Ted thrust his elbow into Bradley's ribs.

"Ouch!" grunted Billy, with a start and a snort.

Professor Gooch looked at him severely and continued in his droning voice:

"Of the general character and history of the Carthaginians, from the founding of the city down to the wars with Rome, less is known than of any other great nation of antiquity."

"I'm glad to see you are so interested, Sir William," whispered Ted, as Billy was dozing off again.

"Eh?" grunted Bradley, with another start.

"Er—er—hum!" snorted the professor, glaring at Billy over his spectacles, while Ted sat up very straight and looked supremely innocent and interested.

Billy was flustered and confused. He fancied the professor had asked him a question, and he retorted:

"Ya-as, ya-as, Hi quite hagree with you, sir."

Whereupon there was a suppressed titter, and the professor, thinking Billy was trying to be "smart" and make sport, said:

"This, is a matter of history, young man, and it makes little difference whether you agree or not."

"Hexcuse me!" gasped Billy, almost, collapsing.

The professor continued:

"With the exception of a few inscriptions on medals and coins, a score of verses in one of the comedies of Plautus, and the periplus of Hanno, not a solitary

relic of Carthage has been preserved."

"How sad!" whispered Smart. Then he snuggled over closer to Bradley.

"Say," he whispered, "what's the longest word in the English language?"

"Hi dunno," confessed Billy. "But Hi'll bet hanything Professor Gooch uses hit hevery day."

"Not so bad for you!" admitted Ted, for, as a rule, Billy was extremely dense and slow to see the point of a joke. "But you'll be surprised when I tell you. The longest word, in the English language is smiles."

Billy showed interest at first, then looked doubtful, mildly surprised, absolutely astonished, and finally positively rebellious.

"Go hon!" he hissed back at Ted. "Hi know better! Hare you taking me for a fool?"

"Oh, dear, no!" said Ted. "I wouldn't think of such a thing!"

"Hi know a 'undred hother words that hare longer," whispered Bradley.

"I'll bet you a treat you can't name one word longer than smiles," returned Smart, with great earnestness.

"Hi'll 'ave to go you. Hit's dead heasy. Hi'll give you the first word Hi think of. Hit's transubstantiation. 'Ow is that?"

"It isn't a patch," asserted Smart. "Look at the short distance between the first and last letters in that word."

"Hey? Well, look at the shorter distance between the first hand last letters hin your word. Hi 'ave got you!"

"Not on your tintype! There is a mile between the first and last letters in smiles."

Billy gasped for breath and grew so excited that there was danger of his again attracting the attention of the droning professor.

"A mile?" he gasped. "You hare a blooming hidiot! 'Ow do you make that hout?"

"It's easy," assured Smart. "If you don't believe it, just knock off the first and last letters of smiles and spell what is left. I'm sure you will find it a mile."

Billy frowned, glared, wrote "smiles" on the margin of a leaf in the book he carried, drew a line after the first "s" and before the last "s," and found that there really and truly was a "mile" between those two letters, whereupon he had convulsions and Professor Gooch paused and stared at him in wondering amazement.

"Woo! woo! woof!" came in a series of explosive grunts from Bradley, who was doing his best to "hold in."

"Really, sir," said the professor severely, "if you feel as bad as that you may leave the room at once."

"Woo! woo! Thank you, sir!" said Billy, and he hustled out to have further convulsions in the anteroom.

Billy was waiting for the others when they filed out of the class-room. He took great delight in repeating any story that he heard. On this occasion he seized on Chip Jolliby as a fit subject to try the story on first.

"Hi say, hold fellow," he said, locking arms with the lank chap. "What is the longest word hin the Henglish language?"

"Ru-ru-ru-rubber," said Chip promptly.

"Hi ham hin hearnest," declared Bradley. "What his the longest word?"

"Ru-ru-ru-rubber," stuttered Chip, once more. "That's the longest word."

"'Ow do you make that hout?"

"Why, if it ain't lul-lul-long enough you can sus-sus-stretch it," said Jolliby, with a grin, but this did not satisfy Bradley.

"You can't stretch hit long henough," he said. "Hi know a word with a mile between the first hand last letters."

"Now you sus-sus-stop," chattered Chip.

"Hi can prove hit," insisted Billy.

"What's the word?" demanded Jolliby.

"It's laughs," declared Bradley triumphantly, giving the lank lad a poke in the ribs. "'Ow is that for 'igh? Hisn't that pretty good, eh?"

To his surprise, Chip looked blank and puzzled.

"Well, hif you ain't a chump!" exploded Bradley, in disgust. "Just spell between the first and last letters hand see hif hit hisn't a mile!"

With which he released Jolliby and turned away, completely dismayed over his ill success.

Smart, who had kept near enough to hear all this, was forced to press his hand over his mouth to prevent a shout of laughter.

"Hi wonder what the matter was," thought Bradley. "'E didn't seem to see the point. Hi'll try hanother fellow."

He sidled up to Brad Buckhart.

"Hi say, Buck'art," he said, "what is the longest word hin the Henglish language. Give hit up?"

"I reckon I'll have to, William," said the Texan. "What is the longest word?"

He looked at Billy in such a way that the Cockney youth was confused and stammered:

"Hit—hit's giggles. Hif you don't believe hit, just spell between the first hand last letters hand you'll find a mile. 'Ow his that?"

The Texan looked Billy over.

"Whatever kind of loco-weed have you been eating?" he exclaimed. "You're plumb loony for sure."

Then he strode away, leaving Billy scratching his head and looking extremely puzzled and bewildered.

Ted Smart was enjoying this hugely. He approached Billy and spoke to him. Bradley glared at Ted.

"What is the matter with your blawsted blooming old joke?" he ripped out hotly.

"Eh?" said Ted, in apparent surprise. "What's the matter? Why?"

"Hi 'ave tried hit hon two fellows, hand hit didn't go hat hall."

"What fellows?"

"Jolliby and Buckhart."

"No wonder it didn't go!" said Ted. "Those chaps are too dense to see the point. Come on with me up to Merriwell's room. Some of the fellows are going up there. Just you spring it there and see if you don't make a big hit with it."

So Bradley was led away to Dick's room, where some of the boys had gathered, it being a general gathering-place for the football-team. Singleton was there, lounging comfortably on a Morris chair. Merriwell was talking to Dare and Douglass. Buckhart and Jolliby had dropped in.

"Give it to them right off the reel," urged Ted, in a whisper to Billy.

"Hi say, fellows," said Bradley, "what his the longest word hin the Henglish language?"

Jolliby and Buckhart looked at each other in disgust.

"What it is, William?" grunted Singleton.

"Give it up?" asked Bradley.

"Sure thing. What's the word?"

"Hit—hit's grins," fluttered Bradley. "Hif you doubt hit, you'll find there is a mile between the first and last letters. Hi can thrash hanybody who doesn't see the point!"

Then, as nobody laughed, he began to tear off his coat, truly fighting mad.

"You hare a lot hof blawsted thick-'eaded Yankees!" he raged. "Hover hin hold Hengland——"

"Dear! dear!" said Smart. "Don't disgrace yourself, Sir William, by thrashing such dummies. It really takes the English to see the point of a joke. Now, when I get a good thing I always take it to you, for I know you will be so quick to catch on!"

This appeased Bradley somewhat, but he returned:

"Hi don't believe they want to see hit! They never want to see hanything when Hi tell hit."

"It's very shameful," said Ted, winking at the others behind Billy's back. "Any one should be able to see in a minute that there is a mile between the first and last letters of smiles."

Then, for the first time, the boys on which Billy had tried to spring the joke saw the point in it. Immediately they began to laugh, which disgusted the

Cockney lad more than ever.

"Look hat that!" he cried. "When Hi say hit nobody laughs; when you say hit they hall catch hon him a minute. Hit's a put hup job!"

"It may look that way, Billy," said Dick; "but I assure you that we have just seen the point of the joke. We humbly beg your pardon. But I assure you that smiles, with its mile between the first and last letters, is not the longest word. I know one that is longer."

"Hi doubt hit," retorted Bradley. "What is hit?"

"It is longer," explained Dick.

"Hi know you said so, but what is the word?"

"It is longer," repeated Dick.

"That's all right. Hit may be, but what is hit?"

"I will spell it for you," smiled Dick. "L-o-n-g-e-r. Can't you see that proves my claim. It is longer."

Bradley paused with his mouth open. Slowly the point dawned on him. He slapped his thigh and uttered an exclamation.

"By Jawve! that's a good one! Hit's better than the hother one! But Hi'll wager hanything lots hof fellows will not see the point when Hi spring hit hon them. Don't you know, Merriwell, Hi believe some people inherit their blawsted stupidity."

"My dear Bradley!" exclaimed Dick, as if shocked. "It's not proper to speak that way of your parents!"

At this the others shouted with laughter, while Bradley was utterly at a loss to comprehend the cause of their merriment.

"You're a 'ole lot of hiddiots!" he cried, his disgust breaking all bounds. "You heven laugh at a fool!"

"Don't—don't cast reflections on yourself!" said Smart.

Billy reached for him, but Ted knew better than to fall into those muscular hands, and he dodged away.

"Hi'll 'ave nothing more to do with you!" declared the Cockney lad, as he turned and stalked out of the room, and the laughter behind him added to his disgust as he closed the door.

CHAPTER XXV—THE SPOOK APPEARS

Ted Smart saw it first, but no one believed him when he told about it. Ted declared that he turned over in bed and beheld a white, ghostly form floating slowly and silently across the room about two feet from the floor. He also declared that he could see through the white form and discern solid objects on the farther side. But every one knew Smart was given to exaggeration, and so they laughed.

"Did you really see anything at all?" asked one.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Ted derisively; "I didn't see a thing. I am stone blind, and I can't see anything."

"But it was dark."

"Oh, the moon didn't shine in at the window at all!" retorted the little fellow. "It was dark as pitch! I can see better in the dark than I can in the daylight!"

All of which meant exactly the opposite.

"Well, what was the spook doing in your room, Smart?"

"Ask me! Just floating round, I fancy. But when the old thing floated my way I just sat up and said, 'Shoo!' like that. The thing stopped and stretched out a hand toward me. I said, 'Oh, Lord!' and went right down under the bedclothes. I don't know how long I stayed there, but when I rubbered out the spook was gone."

"A pretty bad case of nightmare," was the verdict, but Ted did not accept it. He insisted that something had been in his room. True, his door was locked when he got up and looked around, and the "something" was gone.

Ted was the last fellow at Fardale to be able to impress any one with such a story. They guyed him at every opportunity about it. One after another the boys came to him and asked him to tell them about the "spook." They kept him repeating the story over and over until he became tired of it. Then when he became disgusted and refused to talk about it any more they laughed and kept up the sport by gathering around him and repeating what he had said.

Later in the day, Smart said:

"I wonder if spooks have to comb their hair. My pet comb and silver-backed hair-brush are gone. Don't know where they could have gone to unless my spook took them."

Of course he was advised to look around thoroughly in his room for the missing articles. He did so, but the comb and brush he could not find. Ted could not understand why any one should wish to steal the comb and brush.

The very next night Joe Savage saw the "spook."

Savage and Gorman roomed together, although they were not the best of friends, having come to a misunderstanding over Dick Merriwell and football matters.

Joe knew not just what awakened him. It seemed like a long, low sigh. However, when he opened his eyes, he dimly saw a white form standing at the foot of his bed. His first thought was that Gorman had arisen for something, but

a moment later he discovered that Gorman was peacefully sleeping beside him, breathing regularly and somewhat loudly.

Savage was a fellow of considerable nerve, but now he was startled in spite of himself. His room was not on the right side for the moonlight to shine in at his window, but still there was light enough for him to make out the white figure, which had the general semblance of a human being.

Joe thought of Smart's spook-story.

"Rot!" he told himself. "That's what's the matter. I must be dreaming."

He deliberately pinched himself, discovering that he was very wide-awake.

The thing seemed to be looking straight at him, and a feeling of unspeakable queerness froze him stiff in bed. He tried to convince himself that it was a case of imagination, but the longer he looked the plainer he could see the ghostly figure. After a while he became convinced that there really was something white there at the foot of the bed.

Then through the room again sounded that long, low, tremulous sigh. It was expressive of unspeakable sadness, and about it there was something inhuman and spiritlike.

Savage felt himself getting cold as ice. He began to shiver so that the bed shook. In that moment he was ashamed of himself, for he was not a fellow who believed in such nonsense as ghosts. Summoning all his will-power, he sat up in bed, expecting the thing would vanish, in which case he would be satisfied it was an hallucination of some sort. Instead of vanishing, the ghost stretched out a hand toward Joe as if to grasp him.

Immediately Savage lay down again. The thing slowly moved away, disappearing from view.

Joe lay there, hearing Gorman still breathing regularly and stentoriously, but straining his ears for some other sound.

The door leading from his room to the corridor was not in view.

Joe had remained silent thus a full minute or more. At last he forced himself to get out of bed and step out of the alcove into the room. He was still shaking, but he looked about in vain for the spook. The thing, had vanished from the room.

He crossed the floor quickly and tried the door. It was locked.

"Well," said Savage to himself, "I wonder if I really did see anything! I'm almost ready to swear I did, and yet——"

He lighted a match and looked around as well as he could. Lights were not permitted in the rooms at that hour, but he did not believe any one would observe the light from a burning match.

The striking of the match broke Gorman's slumber. He choked, started, and sat up. He saw Savage in the middle of the room, holding the lighted match above his head.

"What's up?" grunted Abe, rubbing his eyes.

"I am," answered Joe.

"What are you looking for?"

"The spook."

"Hey?"

"I saw it," said Savage.

"What's the matter with you?" growled Gorman, in deep disgust. "Come back to bed."

The match burned Joe's fingers and he dropped it.

"I saw something," he declared.

"Been dreaming," mumbled Gorman, lying down.

But the darkness seemed to convince Joe that he had really and truly seen something.

"No," he declared grimly, "I know I saw something at the foot of the bed."

"Pooh!" ejaculated Abe, and he got into a comfortable position and prepared to sleep again.

After returning to bed Joe lay a long time thinking the matter over.

"I'm not a fool," he thought, "and I am ready to bet my life that there was some kind of a thing in this room."

The impression settled on him so that he found it almost impossible to get to sleep. As he lay thus a sudden wild yell echoed through the corridors, followed by a commotion.

Joe had left the bed at a single bound as the yell rang out. Another bound seemed to take him to the door of his room. He found some difficulty in unlocking the door, as the key was not in the lock, and he was compelled to take it from the hook where it hung and use it to unlock the door.

By the time he got outside, with Gorman at his heels, the corridor was swarming with excited cadets in their night garments.

"What's the racket?" asked Savage, of the nearest fellow.

"Jim Wilson saw a ghost," was the laughing answer. "Wouldn't that jar you!"

But immediately Savage was eager to question Wilson. This was prevented, however, at this time, as the boys were hustled into their rooms.

"What do you think of that?" asked Joe, when he and Gorman were back in their room.

"Jim Wilson's a scare-baby," returned Gorman. "If any other fellow had yelled like that I'd thought it a joke to get up a sensation. Wilson would never think of such a thing."

"But I saw something here in this very room a while ago."

"Don't tell anybody that," sneered Abe, as he again prepared to sleep. "They'll take you for a big chump."

Gorman was a fellow who liked to sleep, and he declined to make any further talk.

During the remainder of the night all was quiet about the academy.

CHAPTER XXVI—THINGS ARE MISSING

"Hey, Savage!" said Gorman, as they were rushing through dressing in order to be present at roll-call; "where's my watch?"

"How do I know?" returned Joe, as he buttoned his shirt. "Where you put it, I suppose."

"No it isn't. It's gone."

"Well, I think you'll find it if you look for it."

"But I can't find it!" snapped Gorman. "I left it right here on the table last night, where I leave it every night. It's gone now."

"Well, you needn't look to me for it!" flung back Savage, whose temper had been ruffled by the tone assumed by his roommate. "I hope you don't think I took your old watch? I have one of my own, and—Hey! where's my knife?"

Savage was very neat and trim in his habits, and he always cleaned his finger-nails mornings when he reached a certain point in his dressing. It was shortly after washing his face and hands, as that was the best time to do so. Just now he had thrust his hand into his pocket for his knife, only to discover that it was gone.

Gorman paid no attention to Joe, but continued to look around for his watch, a scowl on his face.

Savage felt hastily through his pockets, then began to look around himself.

"Seen my knife?" he demanded.

"No!" snapped Abe; "but I'd like to see my watch. It's mighty strange where that watch has disappeared to."

Joe stood still, his hands in his pockets, thinking.

"I had that knife last night," he muttered. "I sharpened a pencil with it. I was sitting right there by the table. I put it back into my pocket. Funny where it's gone."

Then the two boys found themselves staring suspiciously at each other.

"My watch is valuable," said Gorman.

"My knife was a present from my mother," said Savage. "I thought everything of it."

"My watch was a present from my father. It was worth a neat little bit."

"I can't help that. I know it is a good watch. You'll find it——"

"I don't know about finding it. I had it last evening. I wound it up just the same as usual before going to bed. I remember very distinctly winding it."

"Well, your watch didn't walk out of this room, did it?"

"How about your knife?"

There was little satisfaction in these questions, and they suddenly realized that they would have to hustle if they were to be on hand at roll-call, whereupon they hastily completed preparations and scudded out of the room, both in a very bad temper.

After roll-call and morning service there were a few moments before breakfast. Savage came upon a group gathered about Gorman, who was telling of the mysterious disappearance of his watch. Just as he came up, Jim Wilson joined the group.

"Lost your watch right out of your room?" he said. "Well, I lost mine last night, so I'm in the same scrape."

"Perhaps your ghost took it, Jim," laughed one of the group of lads.

"Ghost?" exclaimed Gorman. "Why, confound it! Savage said something about a ghost. I woke up in the night and found him standing in the middle of the floor, holding a lighted match over his head. He was white as a sheet."

"How about that, Savage?" demanded several of the boys, who had noted the approach of Joe.

Savage shrugged his shoulders.

"I wasn't going to say anything about it," he declared; "but I did see something in our room last night."

Jim Wilson grew excited.

"What was it like?" he asked wildly, much to the amusement of some of the boys. "Was it tall and white, with long arms, and did it just seem to float along without making a sound?"

"I couldn't see it very plainly. It stood at the foot of the bed. But it was white."

"Did it groan just awful?"

"No; but it uttered a doleful sigh."

"My ghost groaned. Gosh! It made my hair stand right up. Then when the thing lifted its arm I just gave a yell. It vanished quick enough. I got out of the room. Don't know how I got out there. Don't know how I opened the door.

Perhaps it was open. I can't say. Laugh, you fellows! I don't care! I tell you there was something in my room!"

"I suppose you fellows know," said a tall, solemn lad, "that a chap committed suicide here at the academy once?"

"No?" cried several.

"Sure thing," nodded the tall fellow. "Cut his throat. He was daffy."

"Dear me!" murmured Ted Smart, who had just strolled along in company with Dick Merriwell. "What a delightful way to kick the bucket! I admire his taste!"

"But was there a fellow who really committed suicide here?"

"Yes," nodded Dick Merriwell. "My brother told me about it. His name was Bolt. The room he killed himself in was closed for a long time. Some of the fellows used to sneak into it nights when they wanted a little racket. There was a story about the room being haunted; but, of course, that was bosh."

"Was it?" said the tall fellow, in a queer way.

"Perhaps it is the ghost of Cadet Bolt that is romping around here once more," suggested a mocking lad.

"What do you think, Smart?" questioned a boy with squinting eyes.

"I have found it a bad practise to think," answered Ted evasively. "It is wearing on the gray matter, don't you know."

But they observed that Smart was not as lively and jocular as usual.

"This spook seems to be a collector of relics," said Dick. "He has collected something wherever he has appeared. First he got away with Smart's comb and brush, then Gorman's watch; Savage lost a knife, and Wilson is also out a watch."

"Well, what do you think of it?" was the point-blank question put to Dick.

"It's very remarkable," confessed Merriwell.

"Oh, there's nothing in the ghost-story, of course!" said a bullet-headed boy.

"Perhaps there is," said Dick.

"What?" cried several, in surprise.

"You don't believe it?" said one. "You don't take stock in spooks?"

"I might not take stock in this one," admitted Dick, "if it were not that he has taken stock wherever he had visited. In other words, the fact that he has carried off some valuable articles leads me to believe in him."

"But how——"

"Why——"

"You don't——"

"I can't see——"

"You mean——"

"It seems likely that somebody, or something, has been prowling round this building," said Dick, cutting them all short. "There goes the breakfast-bell."

There was a general movement to form into ranks to march to the dining-hall by classes, as was the custom, and the subject was dropped for the time being.

CHAPTER XXVII—DICK MAKES A DISCOVERY

The mystery of the "spook" that had so suddenly appeared at the academy grew with every night. Strange sounds were heard in the corridors, sentinels were frightened, and little articles and things of value continued to disappear from the rooms of the cadets.

"I wonder if this yere spook has visited us, pard?" said Brad Buckhart, one morning.

"Why?" asked Dick.

"My knife is gone now. The critter seems to take to knives and such things as a duck takes to water, and so I thought maybe he had wandered in here and appropriated my sticker."

But Brad dismissed the matter with that, nothing more being said about it.

The "spook" excitement continued to provide a topic of interest for the boys, but the approach of the football-game with the New Era A. A. finally surpassed it in interest.

Various were the opinions expressed in regard to the probable outcome of the game with New Era. Some thought New Era would not be able to score, some thought she would make the game interesting, some even thought there was a chance for her to win; but the majority seemed inclined to the idea that Fardale, thus far undefeated, would not fall before this team.

When the report came that the Trojan A. A., which had been defeated by Fardale, had not permitted New Era to score and had rolled up twenty-eight points, it seemed a settled thing that the cadets were to have an easy time of it. The members of the team grew overconfident, something Dick warned them against.

"Oh, we'll eat those galoots up!" declared Buckhart.

"Perhaps so," said Dick; "but we don't want to be too sure of it. You know it is never possible to know just what to expect from one of these independent teams.

They are full of tricks, and they are not over-particular about their methods."

"Oh, if they are looking for rough-house, they can find it! Remember what happened to the Trojans when they tried that sort of business."

Dick remembered that the Trojans had been battered into a state of amazed decency.

Chester Arlington's interest in the football-team seemed very keen. He was out every day to watch practise, and he cheered and encouraged the boys like a most loyal supporter of the eleven. He even went further than that. Darrell's shoulder had been injured, and Chester declared he knew just how to massage the muscles to bring it back into perfect condition. He peeled off his coat, to the surprise of all, and gave Hal's shoulder a rubbing after practise each day.

And it was a fact that Darrell's shoulder improved amazingly beneath this treatment. Seeing which, some of the other fellows, who were bruised or lame, ventured to ask Chester to give them a little attention.

Dick was not a little surprised when Arlington consented and seemed so intensely eager to have every man on the team in the finest possible condition.

Buckhart looked on in deepest distrust. Leaving Arlington in the gym, working over Bradley, stripped of coat, vest, and hat, and sweating handsomely, Brad followed Dick from the building and spoke to him as they walked toward the barracks.

"This yere Ches Arlington is puzzling me some, I admit I can't just make out his little game now."

"Then you think he's up to some game?" asked Dick.

"Pard, he's crooked. He's been against us ever since he found he couldn't get on the team. There is no reason why he should flop now."

Dick thought how Chester had been compelled to humble himself and ask a favor. Was it possible there had come a change of heart in the fellow?

"I suppose you're right, Brad," he said. "But I don't see what harm he can do. He seems to be doing considerable good."

"I wouldn't let him put his paws on me if every bone in my body was out of place and he could put them all back!" exploded the Westerner. "Bradley's just thick-headed chump enough to let him do it."

In the meantime, Arlington had attended to Billy Bradley, who was the last one to seek his attention, and had donned his coat and vest and found Hal Darrell waiting. Bradley departed, leaving Arlington and Darrell together.

"Well, Arlington, old man," said Darrell, with a puzzled smile, "I never thought you'd come down to it."

Chester flushed a bit.

"Come down to what?" he asked.

"Rubbing these fellows you consider so far beneath you. It is amazing!"

"I suppose so," admitted Chester.

"You have turned Good Samaritan."

"For my own benefit."

"For your benefit?"

"Exactly."

"I fail to catch on. How for your benefit?"

"I've got to get on my feet somehow, Darrell. You know my dislike for Merriwell has led me into betting heavily against Fardale, and I have been soaked good and hard."

"Yes, I know."

"I know you did, but every time I thought I had a sure thing. With Merriwell off the team I should have been eager for Fardale to win. With him on it, I hated him so much that I was more than eager for the other side to win. Fardale secured victory after victory; but that simply made me all the more confident that the tide must turn and she must lose. What's the result? I'm flat. Of course, I can get more money, but really, old man, I'm ashamed to call for it."

Thinking of the money Chester had lost and had squandered in foolish ways, Hal did not wonder that he was ashamed. Truly, it was astonishing that a boy of Chester's years could have so much money to fling about without thought or reason.

"That's the explanation," nodded Arlington. "I must get on my feet somehow."

"I don't see how you expect to do it by——"

"This time I'll back Fardale."

"Why, you can't find any one to bet on New Era."

"Oh, yes, I can! Those New Era fellows have sent some chaps into town looking for bets."

"Why, great Scott! we downed the Trojans, and the Trojans buried New Era!"

"All the same, the sports who are looking for bets seem confident that New Era will make Fardale look like thirty cents."

"But you say you're broke. How are you going to——"

"I've raised money on everything I could hook. I've borrowed some. I want to borrow ten of you, Hal. You know I'll pay if I lose, but I won't lose. Will you let me have a sawbuck? It's my chance to get even, and I'm going to make the best of it."

"Why, yes, I think I can squeeze out a tenner," said Darrell.

"But you will be in up to your eyes if we happen by any chance to drop this game."

"If Fardale loses, I'll have to make a clean breast to mother and get her to

put me on Easy Street again. But Fardale's not going to lose. That's one thing I'm sure of. And I want every man in the best possible condition. That's why I'm working so hard on the fellows who will let me polish them up. See?"

Hal saw, but still it seemed strange that Chester Arlington, proud, haughty, independent, should do what he was doing.

The following day was Friday. After practise Arlington again stripped in the gym and gave his attention to those who would have him.

There was more or less football talk, and the boys gradually dressed and wandered out. A few were left when a little incident occurred that must be recorded.

Again Arlington was working over Bradley. Sweating, he paused to pull out his handkerchief and wipe off his face. As he removed the handkerchief from his pocket a knife dropped to the floor. He picked it up and then paused, staring at it.

Dick noticed this, and he saw Chester stop and stare at the knife. He also noted a frown on Arlington's face, a puzzled expression. Suddenly Dick showed interest.

"Let me see that knife, Arlington," he demanded.

Chester surrendered it.

"Is this your knife?" asked Dick, with something like accusation in his voice and manner.

"No," admitted Chester, "it is not."

"But it came out of your pocket?"

"It dropped to the floor when I took my handkerchief out. I never saw it before."

Dick stood looking straight at Chester. Somehow Arlington's manner seemed truthful. In a moment, however, he grew angry beneath Dick's persistent gaze.

"What do you mean by staring at me that way?" he demanded hotly. "Do you think I'm lying?"

"No," said Dick, turning away and putting the knife in his pocket. "I know the owner of this knife, and I'll give it to him." Then he walked out.

Chester started as if to follow him, but stopped and turned back, saying to Bradley:

"I think you're all right now."

"Here's your knife, old man," said Dick, as he handed the knife over to Buckhart in their room after supper.

"Hey?" exclaimed the Texan. "Why, why, where——"

"It is your knife, isn't it?"

"Sure as shooting. But where did it come from?"

"I saw Chester Arlington pick it up from the floor in the gym."

"When?"

"To-day."

Brad looked surprised.

"Why, it couldn't have been there ever since I lost it," he said. "Somebody would have found it before this."

"It seems that way," said Dick; and he did not explain to Brad that the knife had fallen first from Chester's pocket as he pulled out his handkerchief.

Why Dick chose to keep silent on this point he hardly knew. He was mystified over the knife incident. Chester Arlington did not seem like a fellow who would resort to petty robbery. Surely he would not steal an ordinary pearl-handled knife, worth perhaps three dollars, when he spent money lavishly? And yet Dick had heard it hinted within a day or two that Chester was hard up, and that his parents had declined to advance more money for him to squander until a certain time had passed.

Strange thoughts were flitting through Dick's head. Placed in a desperate situation, would Chester be tempted to pilfer? The "spook," the missing trinkets and articles of value, these things Dick thought about. Then he wondered if there was not some way for him to solve the mystery and clear up the whole affair. But, in the meantime, the football-game with New Era took his attention.

CHAPTER XXVIII—A SLIPPERY TRICK

In the following manner the two teams faced each other on that dark, wet, dreary Saturday afternoon:

A snow-storm had been threatening, but had turned to a rain-storm, the weather becoming milder. It was not a downpour—just a weak, unpleasant drizzle.

But a drizzle could not keep the cadets from turning out to witness the game. They packed the seats reserved for them. There was not the usual large gathering of spectators from the village and surrounding country, although the attendance was not light.

The visitors were the first to come trotting out on the field. They wore some

FARDALE		SPRINGVALE
Shannock	Right end	Porter
Jolliby	Right tackle	Kinter
Bradley	Right guard	Sheehan
Tubbs	Center	Rouke
Dare	Left guard	Mahoney
Gardner	Left tackle	Reed
Buckhart	Left end	Huckley
Smart	Quarter-back	Eyster
Merriwell	Right half-back	Sampson
Darrell	Left half-back	Nelson
Singleton	Full-back	Austin

sort of leathery-looking suits, and in the rain those suits glistened strangely. They did not resort to the practise of falling on the ball in warming up, but passed the ball from hand to hand and did a little kicking.

The Fardale team came jogging out in their well-worn suits. They went at the preliminary practise in the usual manner.

Brad Buckhart squinted at the New Era players, a peculiar expression on his face.

"Whatever sort of suits have they got on?" he said, turning to Jolliby.

"Ask me sus-sus-sus-something I cuc-cuc-can answer," stuttered the tall boy.

"This rain makes 'em shine like grease," said Brad. "They're a queer-looking bunch."

The cadets had given their team a cheer on its appearance. The band was not out. But the boys were prepared to sing and root in earnest.

Dick Merriwell had looked the enemy over. One of the fellows attracted his attention. When he drew aside with the referee and the captain of the visiting team, he said:

"Captain Huckley, there is a man on your team whom I know to be a slugger, as well as a professional. His name is Porter. I have played baseball against him, and know what he is."

"Porter?" said Huckley, not at all pleased. "I think you must be mistaken about his character. He's all right."

"Then he has changed greatly for the better," said Dick. "He has no great liking for me. I had some trouble with him once."

"Well, you can't ask me to break up my team just because you happened to have some trouble with one of the men on it."

"I don't ask you to break the team up; but you may find it a good plan to give Porter warning to play straight football. Those fellows up there on the seats won't stand for crooked work."

"That's all right," came with a sneer from Huckley. "We'll have a snap with your little team to-day, Captain Merriwell. There won't be any need of our resorting to anything but the simplest kind of football."

"That remains to be demonstrated. Perhaps you may change your mind later."

"Time is passing," said the referee. "The game will begin late now."

"We're ready," announced Dick grimly. "Flip the coin. Mr. Huckley may call it."

"Heads," said Huckley, as the coin spun in the air.

"Tails," announced the referee. "Your choice, Captain Merriwell."

There was not much wind, and Dick decided to kick off. So Fardale took the ball and the eastern goal to defend.

Singleton kicked, but, in spite of the fact that there was no wind, the ball flew off to one side and went out of bounds. When it was brought back the big fellow took plenty of time and smashed it hard and fair.

Up into the air and away sailed the ball. Over the muddy field raced Buckhart and Shannock.

Sampson caught the ball. He made no attempt to return the kick, but leaped forward.

Buckhart seemed to have the fellow foul. He tackled, but somehow he failed to hold the fellow, his hands slipping off in a most surprising way.

Sampson dashed onward.

Gardner fancied he saw his opportunity. He closed in on the runner and made a beautiful leap for a tackle.

"He's got him!" cried the cadets.

But, although Gardner's hands fell fairly on the runner, he was unable to hold Sampson, who slipped away from him and still kept on.

Darrell was the third man to tackle the runner, and he brought him down, although Sampson nearly slipped from his grasp in the struggle. But New Era had carried the ball back to her forty-yard line.

"Whatever have those galoots got on?" growled Buckhart, as he hurried to get into the line-up. "Why, I tackled the fellow all right, but he went out of my hands like grease."

Gardner said nothing. He felt chagrined over his failure to stop Sampson. There was plenty of confidence in the New Era players as they lined up for the scrimmage.

There was a sudden signal, a single word spoken, and the ball was snapped and passed to Sampson.

The runner went straight into Fardale's center, which was the strongest point of the home team's line.

Those fellows in the shiny suits hit the line hard, and Sampson came through on the jump. It seemed that a dozen hands grabbed him, but he twisted and squirmed and slipped away and kept on for ten yards before being stopped. Merriwell was in the scrimmage, and he made a startling discovery.

"Boys!" he palpitated, as they prepared to line up again, "their suits are greased!"

It was a fact!

The leather suits, each suit made in one piece, were greased! That explained how it was that the tacklers had been unable to hold the man who carried the ball even when they clutched him with their hands.

That explained how Sampson had been able to slip through the center of Fardale's line when many hands were placed upon him to restrain him.

If anything, the dampness added to the slippery condition of the leather suits, and the New Era players were like a lot of greased pigs.

Merriwell was thunderstruck. Never had he heard of such a trick, and when the truth dawned upon him he felt completely nonplused.

New Era gave Fardale little time for thought. She had the cadets "going," and she meant to keep up the work. Again a word was spoken as a signal, and again the ball went to Sampson. There was a rush toward center, but Sampson circled to come around the right end.

Dick dashed to meet the fellow. He doubted if it would be possible to hold Sampson if he made a fair tackle. Therefore, as Sampson came round the end Dick charged him at full speed, plunged into him heavily and bowled him over.

The ball flew from Sampson's hands.

Dick had expected the shock, and he recovered in a most amazing manner. With a dive, he caught up the ball and leaped away.

A New Era man grabbed for him. He thrust out his hand, caught the fellow under the chin and pushed him off with a thrust that actually lifted him off his feet.

Another came down on Dick, but Merriwell was like a cat on his feet and dodged away.

"I must do it!" thought Dick, as he darted toward the enemy's goal-line.

They were after him. They sought to pen him in. He flew through them.

The cadets rose on their seats and roared.

"Go, Merriwell!" they shrieked. "Go on, Merriwell!"

Considering the condition of the field, considering the fact that there were pools of water and the ground was wet and slippery, Dick's speed was surprising. His dodging was even more surprising. It seemed that Dick was certain of getting through for a touchdown.

Austin cut down on him from one direction. Dick got past the visiting full-back. Then, with a clear field before him, he turned to make straight for the goal.

The other players, spread out and strung out, were coming after him. In that moment, when success seemed certain, Dick slipped. He had kept his feet in turning, twisting and dodging, but now he slipped and came near going down. He was up and away again, but Austin was close upon him.

"He'll make it!"

"No, he won't!"

"Austin has him!"

It was true that Austin had made a beautiful tackle, catching Dick about the legs and bringing him down so near the goal-line that another bound would have carried the ball over.

Then the pursuing players came pouring down upon them. In the lead was Porter, New Era's right end.

Porter jumped into the air to come down on Dick with both feet, evidently hoping to put Captain Merriwell out of the game.

As Porter jumped into the air Dick rolled to one side, seeking to break Austin's hold on his legs.

That saved him from serious injury. Porter struck him with one foot only, and then, as he reeled to fall, Brad Buckhart booted him with all the strength of a muscular leg, lifting him clean over the goal-line.

There was a mad roar of rage from the cadets who had witnessed Porter's dastardly act. Another roar of satisfaction as they saw Buckhart lift the fellow with a swinging kick. Then it seemed that those watching lads would rush down from the seats and come pouring on to the field.

"Hold them back!" cried Professor Broad, the athletic instructor and master of the gym.

Thirty or forty lads, many of them wearing chevrons on their sleeves, joined with Professor Broad in restraining the excited witnesses.

On the field it seemed that a fight was imminent. Some of the New Era men wanted to tackle Buckhart, and he promptly invited them to come on.

"Sail right in, you galoots!" he cried, swinging his clenched fists in the air. "If that's the kind of game you want to play, you'll get all that is coming to you! You hear me shout!"

Captain Huckley restrained his men.

"The whole thing was unintentional," he said.

"Not on my part," promptly confessed Brad. "I kicked the onery skunk, and I meant to do it, you bet! He tried to stamp out my pard, and I'd shot him full of holes if I'd had a gun!"

From behind the ropes where he was being held in check, Chester Arlington cried:

"That's the stuff, Buckhart! Get at him again!"

The excited cadets had been checked, but they were standing, looking black enough as they glared through the rain at the mud-bespattered players.

"Put him off the team!"

Somebody raised the cry, a dozen caught it up, it swelled louder and louder, it rose to a mad roar for the removal of Porter.

"Put him off! Put him off! Put him off!"

"Are you all right, captain?" asked big Bob Singleton, who had pulled Merriwell to his feet.

"All right," assured Dick, squirming a little. "Nearly lost a rib, but I'm all right."

"Porter jumped you with both feet. It was lucky you rolled just as you did."

"Porter, eh? Where's Captain Huckley?"

"Here," was the answer.

"You know what I said about that fellow. He——"

"No use to fuss about him now," said Huckley. "The umpire disqualified him. He's out of the game."

This was true, and a substitute had been called to take Porter's place.

The game went on, Fardale lining up with the ball within two yards of New Era's goal.

The ball was snapped and passed back to Darrell. In a most surprising manner, two or three of New Era's forwards slipped through Fardale's line and had Hal before he could make an advance. Down he went. A loss of three yards! This was bad work.

"Hold fast in the line," urged Dick. "Don't let them through like that!"

"Talk about greased lightning!" grumbled Harry Dare.

"Can't hold them," said Gardner desperately. "Hands slip right off!"

"Whatever sort of a game is this?" growled Brad Buckhart, in deepest disgust. "Are they allowed to wear suits like that? Are they allowed to grease themselves so a fellow can't get hold of them at all?"

The New Era players laughed in the faces of the Fardale lads.

"There are some things about this game you chaps do not know," sneered Durban, who had taken Porter's place.

"We may be able to teach you a trick or two before the game ends," flung back Buckhart.

But Fardale could not seem to do much with these slippery fellows, and she failed to advance the ball, failed in trying for a field-goal, failed so dismally that the watching cadets groaned with dismay.

New Era took a turn at rushing the ball along the muddy field. She plowed into Fardale, and soon it seemed that the cadets had no show at all.

Chester Arlington, his rain-hat slouched over his face, was pale to the lips as he saw those greased players slip through Fardale's line for steady gains, saw the ball carried along the muddy field toward Fardale's goal, realizing in his heart that the home team was playing against a terrible handicap.

"Just my luck!" he thought. "Here I've been betting against Fardale and losing right along; to-day I bet on her, and these duffers come along with a trick that makes our team look like a lot of dubs. I'm beaten again! Lord have mercy! the old lady will have to cough up now, and that's a fact!"

He groaned aloud when the thought of the dreadful condition financially that he would be in if Fardale lost that game. If Fardale lost! There seemed no doubt about that, for New Era walked straight along to a touch-down and then kicked a goal.

Fardale kicked off again. Nelson caught the ball and ran, slipping from the hands of three tacklers who got hold of him fairly. It was awful!

Dick Merriwell brought Nelson down at last, but the ball was in the center of the field.

"Bub-bub-blame this greasy business!" chattered Chip Jolliby, in deepest disgust. "There must be sus-some kuk-kind of a rule against it."

He was covered with mud to the eyes, presenting a comical, as well as a wretched, spectacle.

"Hi don't like this kind of football, don't y' 'now!" wailed Billy Bradley. "Hit's hawful—simply hawful!"

"Brace up!" squeaked Obediah Tubbs. "I wish to thutteration I could git some dry dirt on my hands, then I guess I could hold on to one of them 'tarnal critters."

Buckhart was blustering, but bluster did not amount to anything in this game. New Era had Fardale on the run, and she kept the work up. Again the ball was rushed down to Fardale's line, the cadets being unable to hold the greased players. This time, however, Austin failed to kick a goal.

Dick talked to his men.

"Hold 'em, fellows," he urged—"hold 'em as well as you can this half. I have an idea. We'll get after them hard in the last half. They're not our match. We can down them handily on even terms."

Dick was satisfied from what he had seen of New Era's playing that the team was not a match for Fardale on even terms. Had the suits of the visitors not been greased they could not have held their own with the cadets.

Having arrived at this belief, Dick began to think swiftly, and an idea soon flashed through his head. So he urged his men to hold New Era down as well as possible in the first half, promising a change in the final half.

The boys responded as well as they could under such discouraging conditions. Covered with dirt and grease, they stuck their toes into the mud and fought every inch of the ground. But New Era pushed her advantage, and before the half ended she had made three touch-downs, failing, however, to kick but one goal. And the whistle blew for the end of the half with the ball again less than seven yards away from Fardale's line.

CHAPTER XXIX—THE MAGIC POWDER

Sympathizers with the cadets crowded about the gate as they passed out to trot over to the gym.

"Too bad, fellows!"

"Go for them next half!"

"Don't give up!"

Some of them shook hands with the players as the latter passed out.

"You're all right, Captain Merriwell!"

"We're betting on you yet!"

Dick laughed. His hand was grasped once or twice. He felt something left in his palm. Looking down, he discovered a folded bit of paper.

As he trotted toward the gymnasium Dick unfolded the paper. On it he read, written with a lead-pencil:

> "To solve the mystery of the spook, look at Chester Arlington's watch. Ask him to let you see it. Ask Abe Gorman has he seen it before. —A Friend."

Dick thrust the paper into a safe place and kept on to the gym. Chester Arlington was there. He had his coat and vest off, his sleeves rolled up, and he was ready to give attention to any one who needed it.

Dick seized Elmer Dow at the door of the gymnasium and said something to him in a low tone.

"Have to go to the village for the stuff," said Elmer.

"No," declared Dick. "I bought a lot to use on rainy days when we had to play ball."

Then he told Elmer where to find whatever it was that he wanted, and Dow hurried away.

Bradley's shoulder had been twisted again, and Arlington was at work on him.

Abe Gorman was once more taking interest in the eleven, and, as he had managed the team, he was present in the gym.

"What time is it, Arlington?" asked Dick of Chester.

"Don't know. There's my coat and vest on that peg. Look at my watch."

Chester seemed so busy that he scarcely realized who had asked to know the time.

Dick stepped over to the wall and took a watch from Chester's pocket. He had noted that Gorman was close at hand. In a low tone, he said:

"Look here, Gorman; do you know this watch?"

Abe looked at it, started, gave a jump and grabbed it.

"Do I know it?" he cried excitedly. "It's mine! Why, where did you——"

He stopped short, seeing that the watch was attached to a chain that was hooked into the vest hanging on the wall.

"Whose coat and vest are these?" he asked harshly.

Chester had been attracted by Abe's words. He left Bradley and stepped over.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Does this coat and vest belong to you?" demanded Gorman.

"Sure thing," nodded Arlington.

"Well, will you explain how you happened to have my watch in your pocket?"

"Your watch?"

"Yes."

"Why——"

"Here it is! I saw Merriwell take it from your pocket. It's attached to this chain."

Arlington seemed thunderstruck. Dick was watching Chester closely, and he thought:

"The fellow is amazed, or he's an excellent actor."

"What sort of a joke is this?" Arlington demanded. "Where is my watch?"

"I don't know about your watch," said Gorman coldly; "but I do know that this watch, found in your pocket, is my watch. I wish you to explain how its came there!"

Chester had turned pale.

"Why, confound it! I hope you don't think I stole your old watch, Gorman?" he said hotly.

"I have not stopped to think much about it. I know it was stolen from my room, and I know it was found in your pocket."

Other fellows were gathering around, and Arlington grew indignant.

"I'd have you understand," he said fiercely, "that my father is D. Roscoe Arlington, and I do not have to become a petty thief! I can have a dozen watches, if I need them. Somebody put that watch there to injure me! Merriwell, you—you asked what time it was! I told you to look at my watch. You—you are the one who took it out of that pocket! You," he almost shouted—"you have put up this job on me!"

In his great excitement, Chester seemed almost ready to hurl himself at Dick.

"Steady!" flung back the captain of the eleven. "No fellow ever knew me to put up a dirty job on another. I found that watch in your pocket, Arlington."

"Ready for the field!" cried the timekeeper. "Everybody hustle! Just time to get back."

The football-players hurried toward the door. Dick, with the others, leaving Gorman and Arlington to settle the matter.

Elmer Dow came panting into the gym.

"Got it?" asked Dick anxiously.

For reply Dow thrust into Dick's hands a large paper bag. Dick opened it quickly and peered within.

The bag contained a glistening white powder.

"That's the stuff!" exclaimed the captain of the eleven exultantly. "Now we'll see if there is no way of holding on to those greased New Era chaps!"

And he hurried to overtake his men.

When the Fardale team went on the field for the second half it was observed that across the breast of each man was a strange broad white streak. From a distance it looked like a broad chalk-mark, somewhat wider than a man's hand.

New Era was confident. She expected to use Fardale worse in the second half than she did in the first. The shiny suits of the New Era men looked shinier and more slippery than ever.

The rain had stopped, but the field was a muddy spectacle.

After the kick-off the two teams went at each other in earnest. As they lined

up for the scrimmage, the Fardale men were seen to rub their hands across their chests where the white streak could be seen.

When the crash came Fardale went into the enemy with ginger, and New Era found difficulty in slipping through after the fashion set earlier in the game. Somehow, for all of the greased suits, the Fardale lads were able to grasp the enemy and cling to them. New Era was surprised by her first repulse.

The two teams lined up again. Signal. Back went the ball to Sampson. He was the man to make a gain in an emergency.

A revolving formation smashed into Fardale's right wing. Sampson was shot out of it with the ball. But not until the cadets had begun in the most surprising manner to yank the formation to pieces.

There seemed an opening between Bradley and Jolliby, and through this Sampson tried to plunge.

Dick Merriwell met him. Dick's hands fell on him. Sampson gave a wrenching twist and sought to slip away, but he did not slip.

Dick held the fellow fast and flung him backward. Fardale closed in, and the rush was stopped. Still New Era was not satisfied. What had happened that she could not slip through the Fardale line after the same fashion as before?

Another line-up was followed by an attack on the left wing of Fardale's line. Kinter and Sheehan sought to force Dare and Gardner apart. But Dare and Gardner had rubbed their hands across that magic belt of white on their breasts, and they gripped Kinter and Sheehan with hands that did not slip. The others who sought to aid Kinter and Sheehan were baffled, and when Nelson took the ball through the line he was grabbed and held.

Down! The cadets were roaring. They knew something had happened. They realized that the "greased pigs" were not having a snap, after the way of the first half.

New Era was held for downs. The ball went to Fardale. How the cadets on the seats did cheer!

Fardale had new life. She went into New Era smashingly. The ball was advanced—three yards, five yards, nine yards!

New Era was amazed. They saw the cadets rub their hands across their bosoms and then tackle surely and firmly. What sort of magic was this?

Fardale did not give up the ball. She walked steadily along the muddy field with it, playing hard, swift and handsomely.

Not until Fardale had advanced to within five yards of the goal did she lose the ball. Then it was lost on a fumble by Darrell, Sheehan coming through and falling on it. But now New Era was rattled. The visitors realized now that without the advantage of the greased suits they would not stand much show in the game, and something had happened which seemed to rob those greased suits of their

effectiveness.

The muddy hands of the Fardale lads soon destroyed the whiteness of the line across their breasts; but one or two of them seemed to be carrying a white powder, which was passed from hand to hand. Each of the cadet players took a handful of this powder and smeared it across his breast, partly renewing the white line.

New Era, in her excitement, started with an off-side play that set her back half the distance to the goal-line. On the very next play there was holding in the line, and the ball went to Fardale.

The cadets signalized their recovery of the ball by pushing it over for a touch-down at the very first attempt.

Singleton kicked for a goal, but with the stopping of the rain a wind had risen, and he did not take it into consideration, with the result that the ball was deflected so that it struck one of the uprights and bounded off.

Score: New Era, 16; Fardale, 5.

Fardale's chances looked desperate, but she was right in the game with vim and ginger at the next kick-off. Plainly she was playing to win, if such a thing was possible. By this time New Era had fathomed the secret of Fardale's success in seizing and holding the visiting players in the greased suits. It was resin—powdered resin!

Dick Merriwell had sent Elmer Dow for a bag of the stuff, which he had used while pitching to handle a wet and slippery baseball. This powdered resin had been smeared across the breasts of the Fardale players, who rubbed their hands in it frequently, and thus were enabled to grasp and hold the greased visitors.

Somehow Fardale's success in meeting and spoiling the effectiveness of New Era's trick seemed to take the heart out of the enemy. Seeing this, the cadets played with renewed energy, and it was not long before the ball was again carried to New Era's line and pushed over for a touch-down.

This time Smart held the ball, and Dick did the kicking. Dick waited for the wind to lull a little, and then he kicked with all the skill and judgment he could command. The oval sailed straight over the center of the cross-bar.

Score: New Era, 16; Fardale, 11.

Chester Arlington was shaking with excitement. He had shouted until his voice was a husky whisper.

"Keep it up!" he croaked. "One more touch-down! One more goal! We'll win!"

But the time was short, and, for all of her success, Fardale's chances seemed small. Dick urged his men to do their best, and they responded after the manner of true Fardale boys.

Getting the ball, New Era attempted to keep it in her possession and kill

time, knowing that would enable her to win. But Fardale was fierce, and a fumble gave Ted Smart his chance. He dropped on the ball, with six or seven fellows on top of him.

Fardale had the ball, though Smart was carried from the field for the first time during the season, being replaced by Toby Kane.

Fardale went into the enemy with such fierce rushes that New Era was beaten backward yard by yard, fighting every foot of the distance. Every spectator was standing now, for all understood what might happen. Fardale could tie the score with a touchdown. With a touch-down and goal she could win the game.

With less than a minute to play, Fardale was still nine yards from the goal.

"A kick from the field!" cried somebody. "She's going to try to tie the score!"

It seemed like a kick for a field-goal, but the movement had been made to deceive New Era. The ball was passed to Dick, who went into New Era's center directly behind Obediah Tubbs.

The fat boy walked in with his arms swinging, and he hurled players to the right and left. Once before he had won a game by tearing a hole through center at a critical period, and now he repeated the performance. He ripped up New Era's center in splendid style, and through the opening went Dick Merriwell. Right over the line shot Dick, Sampson tackling him and pulling him down a second too late. It was a touch-down.

The score was tied and time was up!

But a touch-down made under the circumstances gives the team making it an opportunity to kick for goal, so the ball was brought out. Darrell held it, and Dick Merriwell drove it over the cross-bar, winning the game by one point.

CHAPTER XXX—THE TRAP SPRUNG

"Whatever are you doing, pard?" asked Brad Buckhart, as he found Dick at work on the hinges of the door to their room.

"Sh!" cautioned Dick. "I'm setting a trap."

"Hey? A trap?"

"I said so."

"What for?"

"A spook."

"What?" The Texan was astonished.

It was three days after the game with New Era. The mystery of the spook remained a mystery. Nor had Chester Arlington been able to explain how Abe Gorman's watch happened to be found in his pocket.

Chester was under a cloud. It was known at the school that he had spent money so freely that his recklessness had left him "broke." It was known that money had been refused him by his parents. It was known that he had resorted to desperate measures to "raise the wind." He had pawned clothing and trinkets to get money to bet on the game between Fardale and New Era. Had New Era won, his condition would have been worse than ever; but the victory of the home team had eased the strain somewhat. Arlington realized that he was suspected, but he carried his head high and proclaimed his innocence.

Buckhart became interested in Dick's work.

"What sort of a trap is it?" he asked.

"I'm fixing the door so that it will swing to whenever it is opened."

"What of that?"

"I am going to put an extra spring-lock on it."

"Oh, I see; you're fixing it to keep the spook out."

"No; I'm fixing it to keep the spook in!"

"Hey? Great horn spoon! What—what if—I don't understand, anyhow."

"I'll explain."

"Go ahead."

"I shall put the spring-lock on the door, but it will not be used in the daytime. I shall fix it so that it will work at night."

"Still I don't see——"

"Wait. When we go to bed at night I shall leave the regular lock on; but I have a method by which I can cause the spring-lock to work if the door is opened and closed during the night. If Mr. Spook takes a fancy to come in here, the spring in the hinges of the door will cause it to close behind him, the spring-lock will fasten it, and Mr. Spook will be trapped."

"But you think——"

"I think our spook is some fellow who has keys to fit the doors of a number of rooms. He can open the ordinary lock on this door, for he came here and carried off your penknife, which Chester Arlington afterward dropped."

"Arlington is the spook."

"Perhaps so. It seems that way. I did not tell you that, after the New Era game, while the crowd was pawing me over, another note was thrust into my

hands, did I?"

"No."

"Well, that was what happened. Of course, I couldn't tell who put it there."

"What did it say?"

"It said 'Search Chester Arlington's room and see what you will find if you wish to clear mystery of the spook.'"

"Great tarantulas! And you—what did you do?"

"I waited. Since then several articles stolen from fellows here have been returned to them in a mysterious way."

"Which makes you think—what?"

"Arlington returned them. Perhaps he became frightened. Perhaps he felt that he didn't need them any longer after Fardale defeated New Era and he won his bets."

"He's a skunk, pard! I reckon he's a regular kleptomaniac."

"But the robberies have started up again. I want you to help me spread the report that we think it strange we have not been robbed of anything valuable. I want you to say that we don't take much stock in it, as we leave things lying around every night that are worth taking. I will say the same things. Get the fellows to repeating it. I want the spook to visit us."

"I see, pard," nodded Brad. "I'll do it."

This plan was carried out by them, and two nights later the "spook" paid them a visit. Dick it was who heard him moving with a rustling sound in the room. As Merriwell sat up the spook went rustling toward the door. Dick jumped out of bed and saw a white form at the door.

"Hey, Brad!" he shouted. "We've got him! Come on!"

The Texan rose, uttering a snort.

The white object seemed trying to open the door, but it resisted his efforts.

"No use," declared Dick triumphantly. "The trap is sprung, and you're caught!"

He advanced on the spook, who turned, uttering a low snarl. Dick saw an uplifted hand, dodged, clutched a very real wrist, held fast and closed with the fellow.

"Light up, Brad!" he cried.

Buckhart struck a match and lighted the lamp. The spook fought desperately, and Buckhart hastened to aid Dick to subdue him. They smashed against the furniture and walls, overturning chairs and making a great racket.

The noise aroused others, and there came a heavy knocking at their door, while many voices demanded admittance.

"We've—roused—the whole—'cademy!" panted Buckhart.

"All right," panted Dick, as he skilfully tripped the spook and they all came

crashing to the floor.

They pinned him down and subdued him. He was covered by a sheet. Having secured the fellow, Dick directed that the door be opened, and Buckhart opened it. Into the room came a dozen cadets.

"Dear me!" said Ted Smart. "How quiet you are! I can't sleep, it is so still!"

"What is it?" was the general question.

"It is the spook!" triumphantly said Dick. "Take a look at him. We captured him, but he made it lively for us. He tried to stick me with that knife there on the floor."

"A fellow with a sheet over him!" grunted Bob Singleton.

Dick tore the sheet off and got up, permitting the captive to rise. Miguel Bunol stood before them! The spook was unmasked at last.

"To the guard-house with him!" cried Dick. "His hash will be settled in the morning."

Bunol looked at Dick with intense hatred.

"Fool!" he hissed. "I give you chance to destroy your worst enemy and you do it not! You hate him; I hate him. I want you to disgrace him, but I do not understand that you be such a fool."

Then he was marched away.

Bunol was expelled and turned out of the school in disgrace. He tried to strike Arlington before leaving by seeking an opportunity to tell things against him, but no one would listen to him, and his revenge failed.

THE END.

No. 92 of the Merriwell Series, entitled "Dick Merriwell's Defense," by Burt L. Standish, gives the hero a chance to prove that he is able to overcome real difficulties and win ultimate success. It will stir the reader's ambition to become a good athlete.

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